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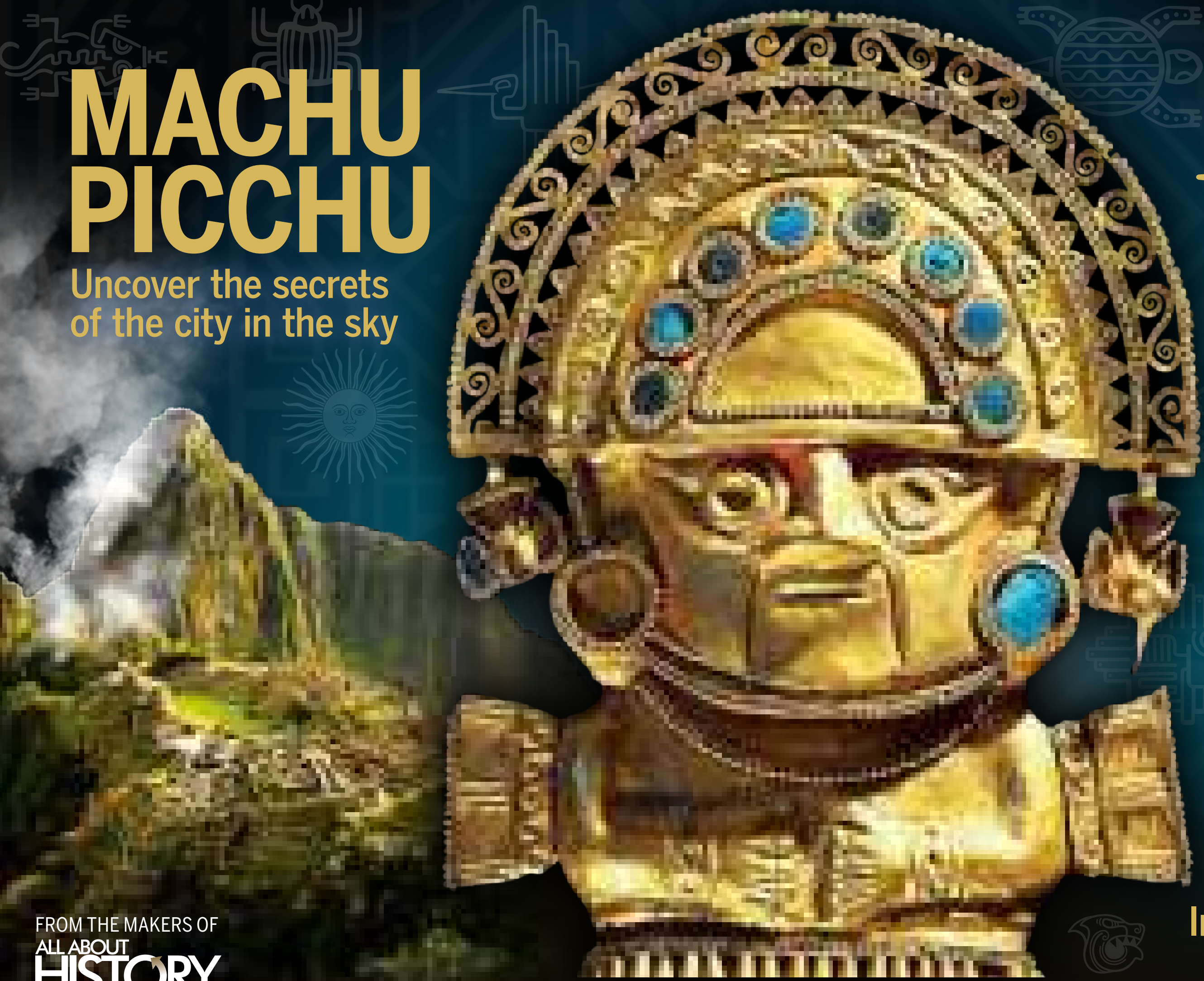

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FUTURE

BOOK OF THE

INCA

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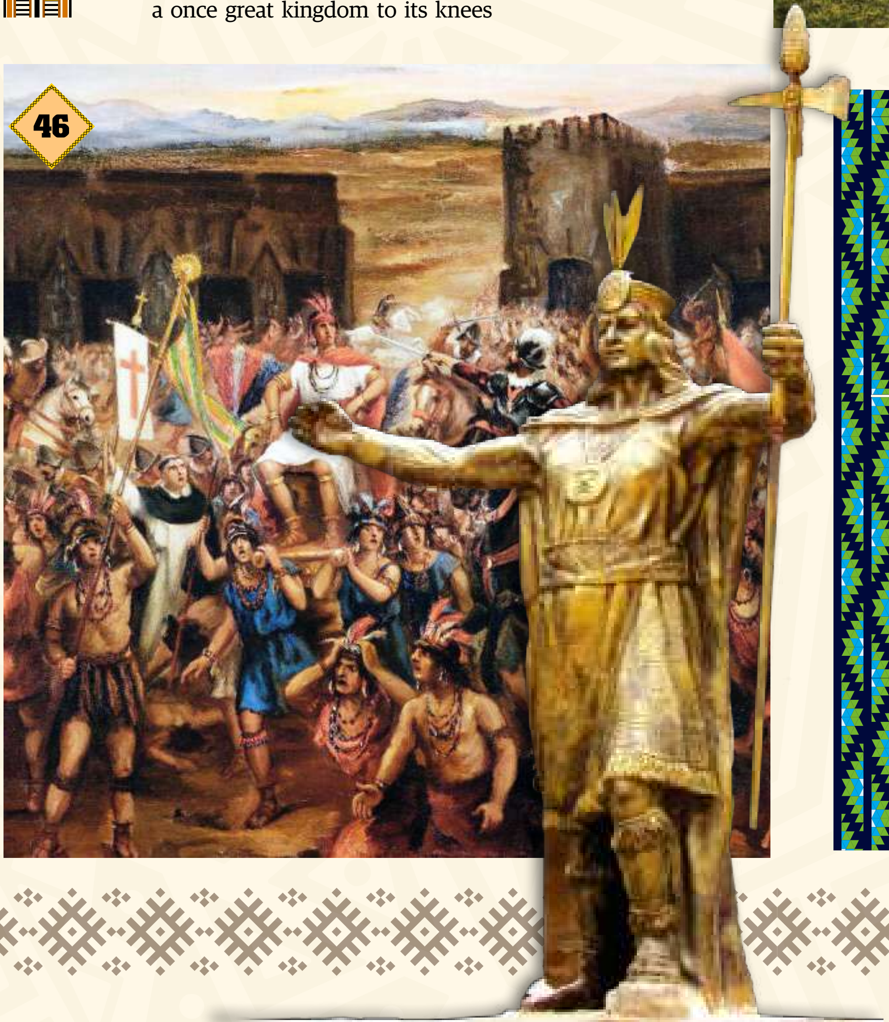

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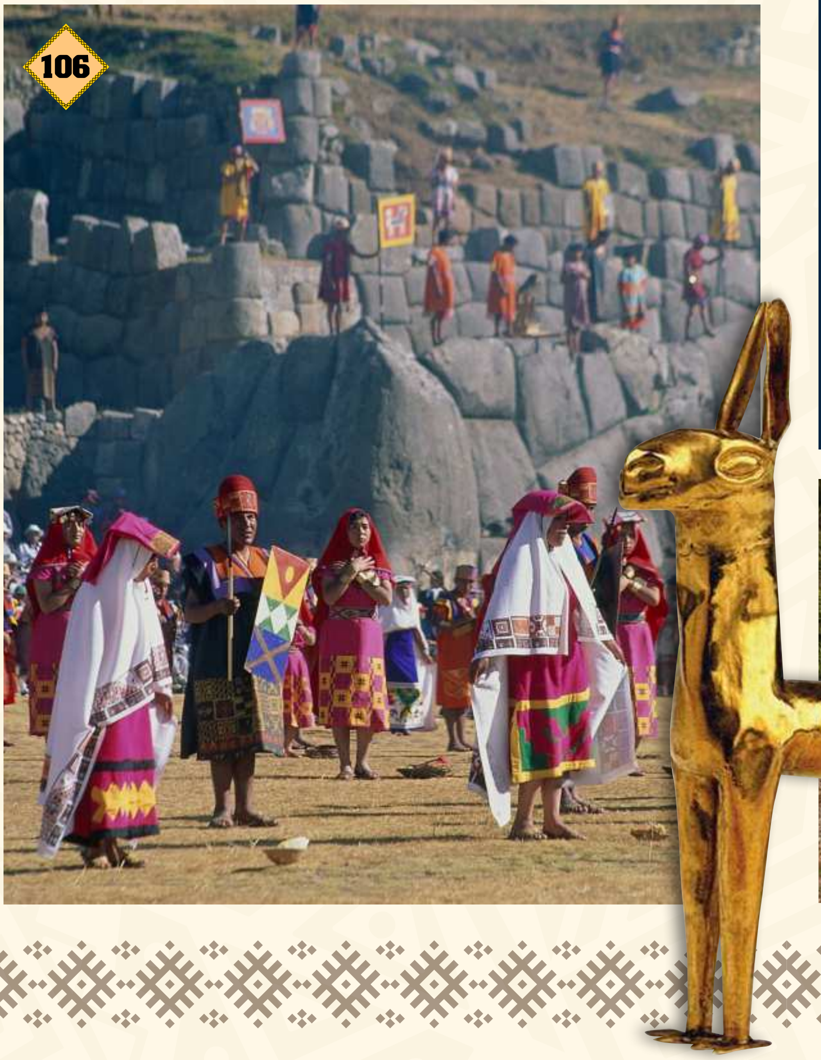

Origins

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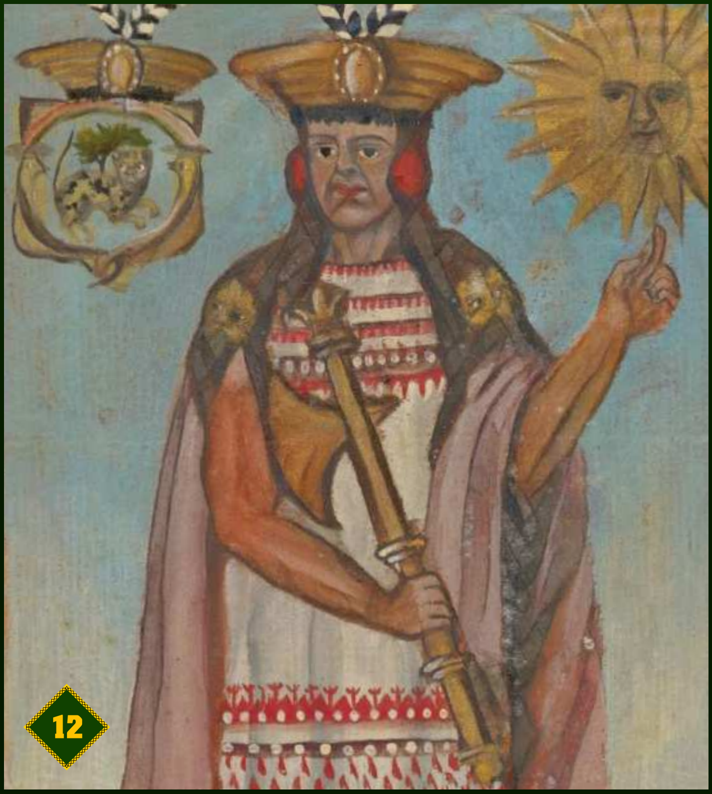

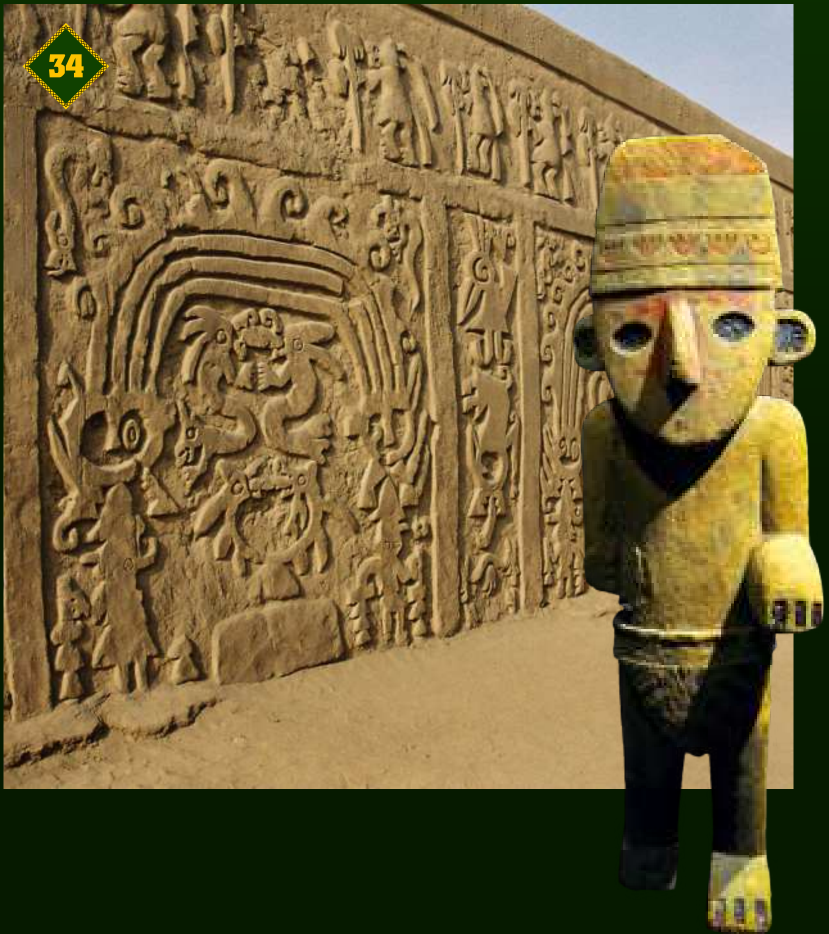

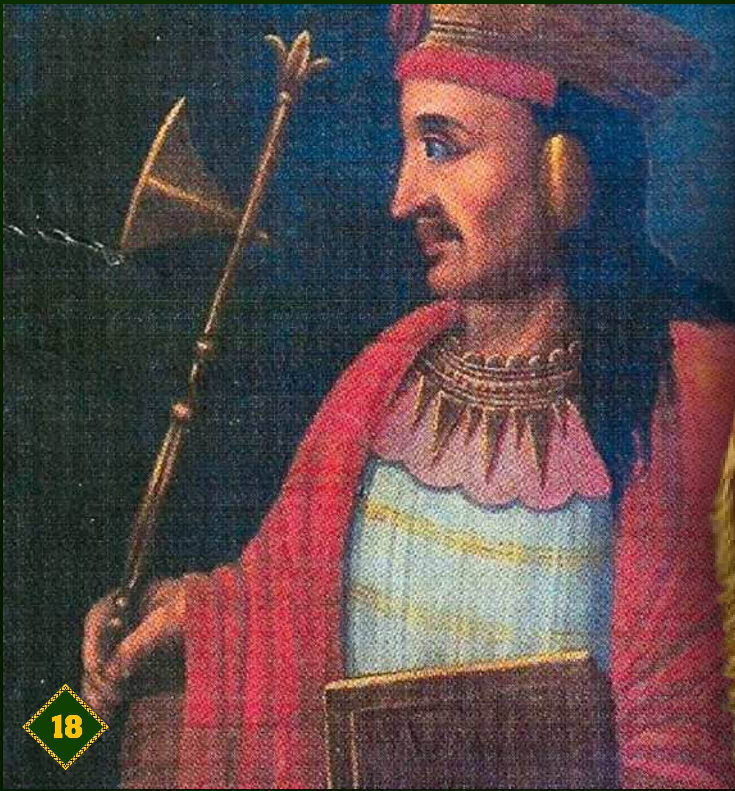
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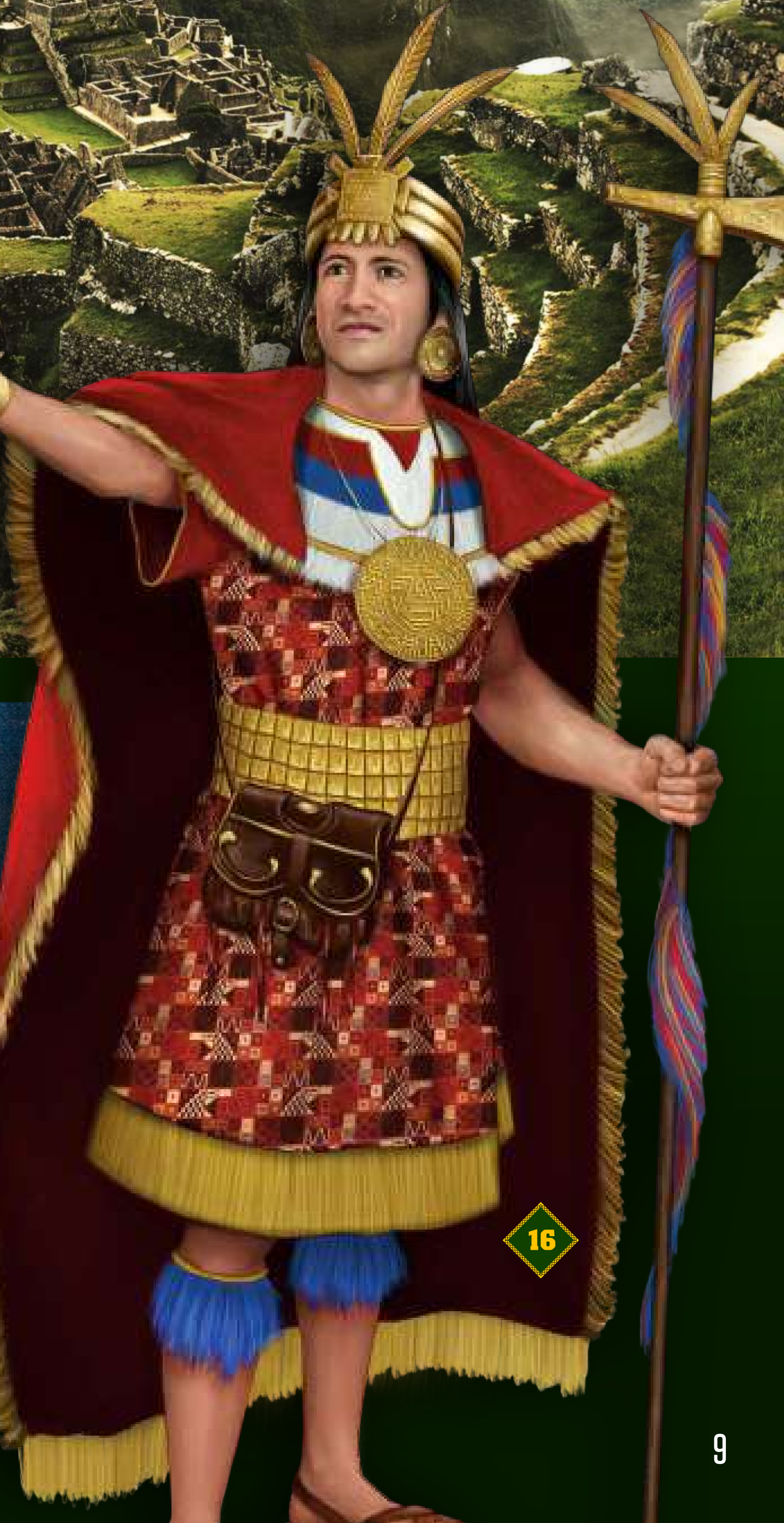
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The origins of the Inca

Myth, history and warring tribes at the beginning of time

Written by Arisa Loomba

At its peak, the Inca civilisation comprised 10 million inhabitants from over 100 ethnic groups. First appearing in southeastern Peru, they were the largest pre-Columbian empire in the New World. But the Inca only became an empire in the true sense of the word after 1438 thanks to territorial expansions made by the leader Pachacuti. They fell to the Spanish not long after their heyday in 1572.

But for the first 300 years, starting in the 12th century, the Inca people were but a small and domineering valley tribe that would slowly grow into a great empire. Who were these people, and how did they emerge?

In our soundest reconstruction of the Inca's origins, which details through oral storytelling how the Inca were born, the world was shaped by the creator god Viracocha and the Sun god Inti. They were powerful but lonely. In the ancient village of Pacariqtambo, in a mountain called Tampu T'oqu (the window house), are three windows, or caves, from which four sons and four daughters, the Inca's ancestors, emerged from the underworld on the ordination of Inti to populate the region. They were born to keep him company, worship him and build him a temple in a bountiful homeland that their destiny was to search for on their travels.

The leader of the siblings, Manco Cápac, was the son of the Sun god. His sister-wife, Mama Ocllo, was the daughter of the Moon goddess Mama Killa. Manco, Ocllo and their siblings were sent by Inti and Viracocha to look for a place to build an empire. When they arrived at the right place, the golden staff they carried would stick fast in the ground – a sure sign.

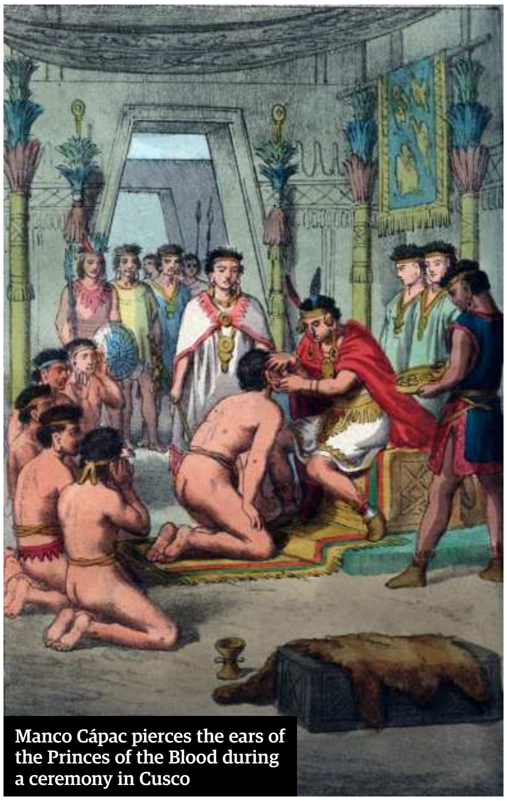
In this way, after as many as 20 years of wandering, they stopped at the edge of a mountain, finding themselves looking down into the Valley of Cusco. The golden staff, or tapac-yauri, stuck.

Each sibling served a different role along the way and met a different fate upon arrival; destroyed, left behind or turned by Manco into sacred stones that still stand today. Manco, Ocllo and the remaining few siblings violently subdued the small tribes they found there and declared their right to rule the region. The Inca civilisation was born.

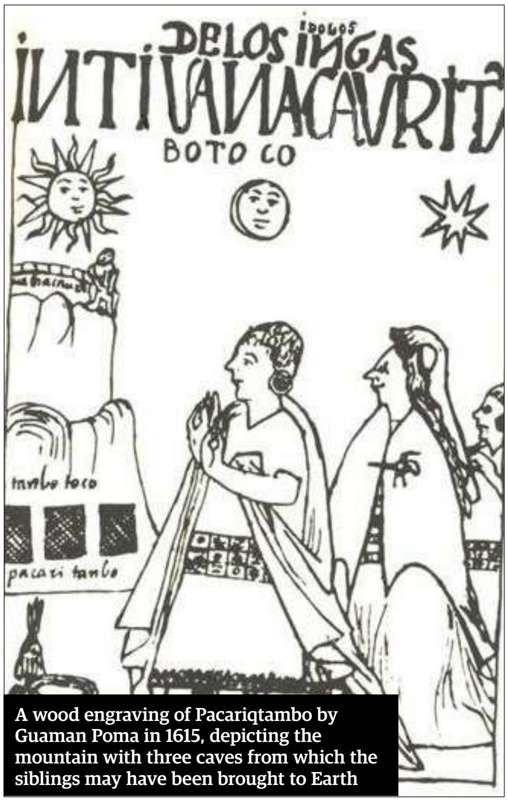
Beyond this grand legend, who and what tribes might these ancestor-siblings have represented? Why did they migrate to Cusco? And who lived in the Cusco Valley before their arrival – or invasion?

The chronology and placing of this legend is hazy when we try to fit it into written European conventions of history. It's a difficult and perhaps futile endeavour, for it is better suited to Andean concepts of oral, cyclical history. When written down in Spanish, it became somewhat tangled, distorted and confused, making it all the more difficult to decipher what may have happened.

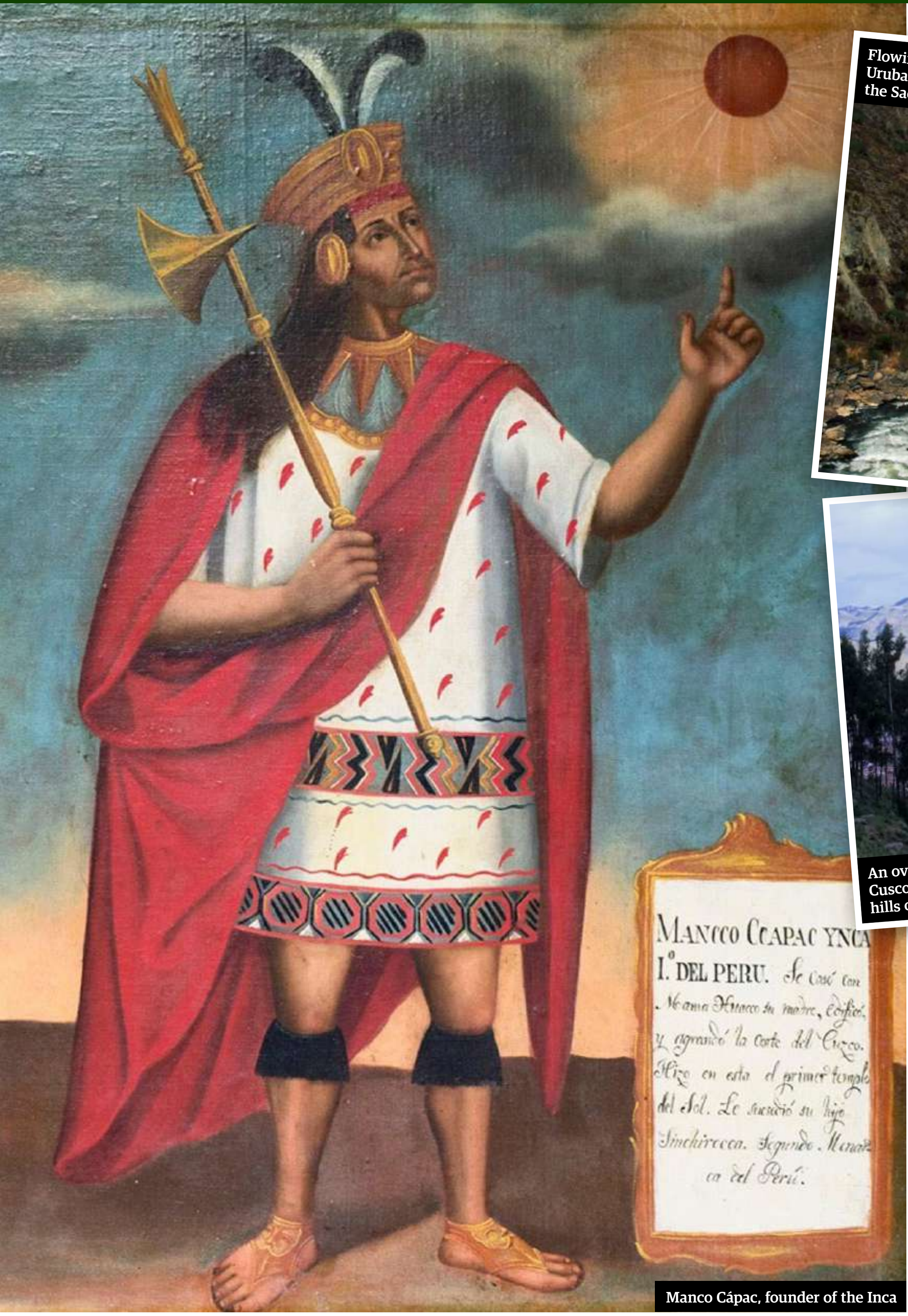
It seems likely, according to historians, that Manco Cápac was a real historical figure. Combining myth and history in a fluid relationship, it is possible that the eight figurative ancestor-siblings represented people of various tribal origins around Pacariqtambo divided into groups, called ayllus, who accompanied them on a journey to find fertile soil: the first group of loyal Inca citizens.



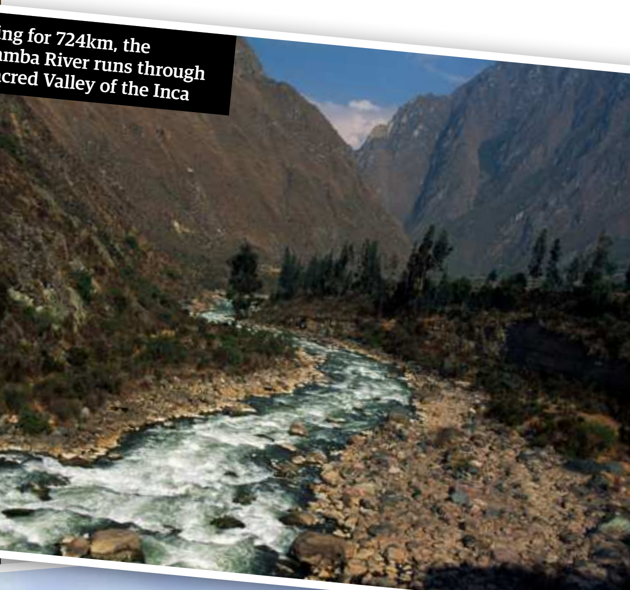
Manco Cápac pierces the ears of the Princes of the Blood during a ceremony in Cusco

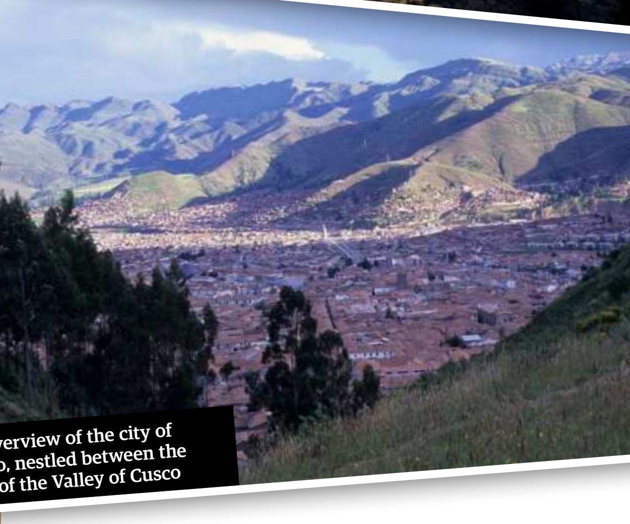


A wood engraving of Pacariqtambo by Guaman Poma in 1615, depicting the mountain with three caves from which the siblings may have been brought to Earth


Mancco Ccapac Ynca
I.° DEL PERU. Se casó con
Mama Huacco su madre, edificó,
y agrandó la corte del Cuzco.
Hizo en esta el primer temple
del Sol. Le sucedió su hijo
Sinchirocca. Segundo Monar-
ca del Perú.

Manco Cápac, founder of the Inca


Flowing for 724km, the Urubamba River runs through the Sacred Valley of the Inca


An overview of the city of Cusco, nestled between the hills of the Valley of Cusco

We can surmise that around the time Manco Cápac and his symbolic siblings might have arrived in the Cusco Valley, there were likely to have been many ethnic groups already coexisting, sometimes warring, in a region with a strong highland social structure that divided people according to caste and class. The Cusco Valley was located at the nexus of two earlier empires: the Wari and the Tiwanaku. Around 1100, the Wari culture collapsed following a period of severe droughts. Refugees flooded into the highlands, sparking resource wars for land and water. The Inca benefitted from fertile lands in the Cusco Valley, irrigated by the Urubamba River and warming microclimate, allowing them to flourish with fruitful harvests and gather strength as they grew. Rather than having to build an empire afresh, the infrastructure of roads and irrigation left behind by the fleeing tribes gave them a leg up.

The main tribes in the area when this band of hungry travellers called the Inca disrupted the peaceful equilibrium of a quiet valley were the indigenous Hualla, and the Sausiray, Antasaya and Alcavisas, who arrived in the valley over prolonged periods before 1100. From what we can understand, the four brothers and their sister-wives, their various fantastical and tragic fates, and the cave-windows from which they are said to have emerged represent different regions and ethnic groups and their separate periods of entry and dominance over the region.

It is likely that the Inca tribe warred with surrounding peoples in the Cusco Valley for many years before becoming pre-eminent, incorporating those who did not flee. Evidence of these complexities behind what the myth represents is depicted in contemporary accounts, such as Guaman Poma's *A Letter to the King*, which though highly problematic, is one of the only comprehensive Inca histories by an indigenous person that we have.

What this shows is that diversity (implying disunity) of language and religion was not seen as conducive to a strong empire. An origin myth emerged to present the Inca as having acknowledged no worthy human existence before their arrival, conveniently obscuring and forgetting centuries of warfare and contestation in which the Inca were but a small, determined community among many. Reading against the grain from the few sources we have, we can speculate about the violent and fraught origins of the Inca.

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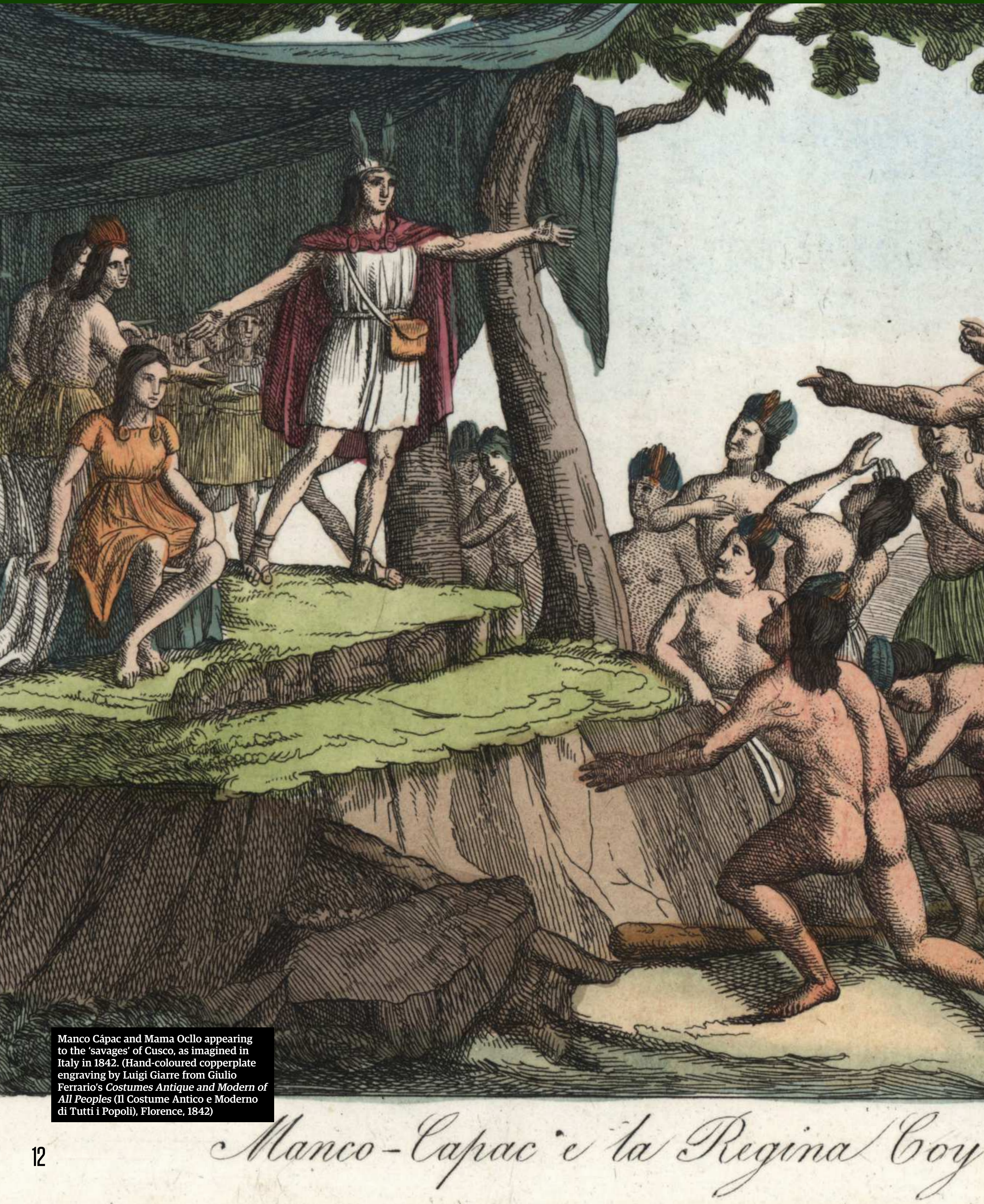
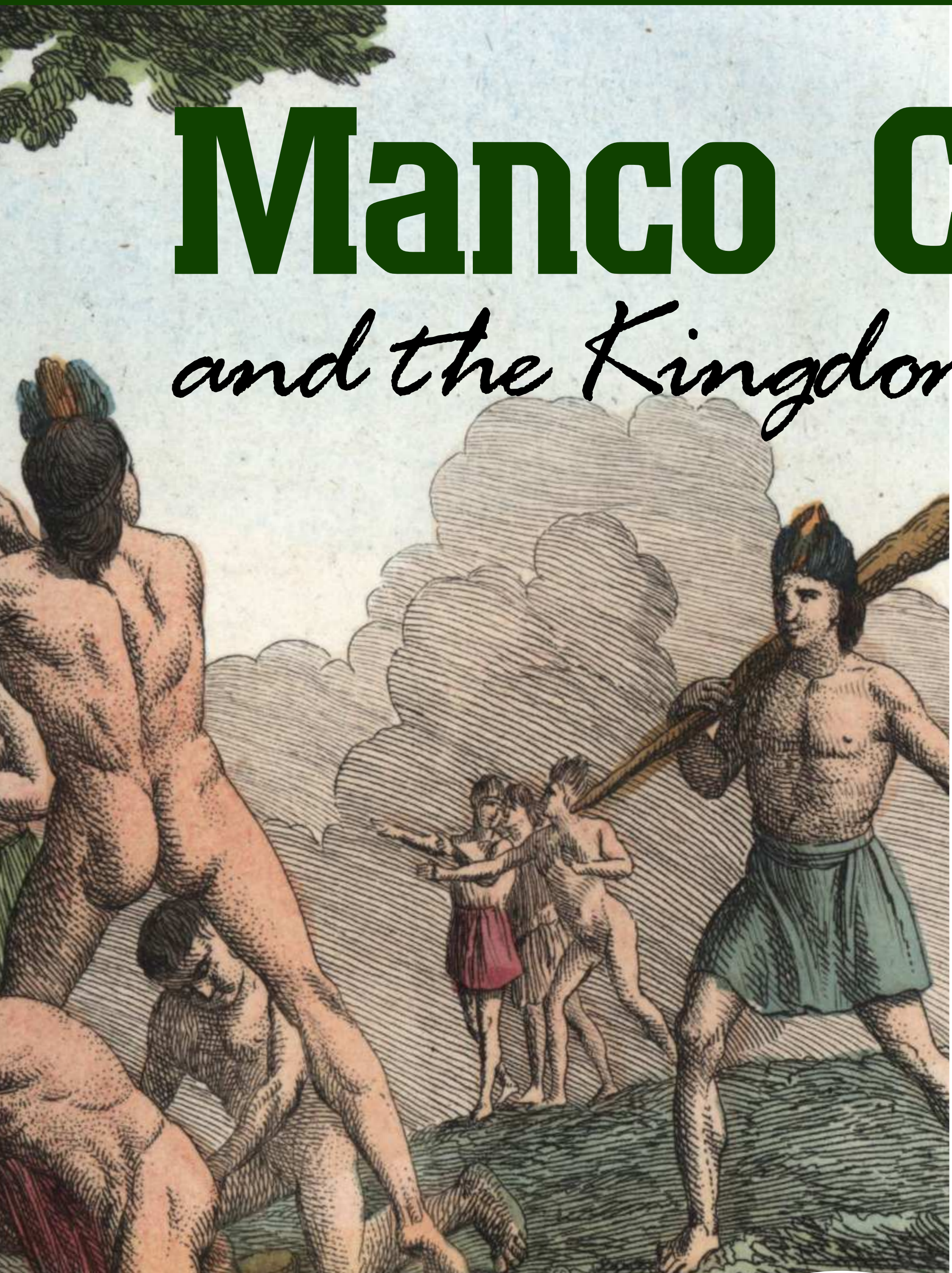

Manco-Capac e la Regina Coy

Manco Cápac and Mama Ocllo appearing to the 'savages' of Cusco, as imagined in Italy in 1842. (Hand-coloured copperplate engraving by Luigi Giarre from Giulio Ferrario's *Costumes Antique and Modern of All Peoples* (Il Costume Antico e Moderno di Tutti i Popoli), Florence, 1842)



Manco Cápac and the Kingdom of Cusco

Searching out the life story of the first Inca

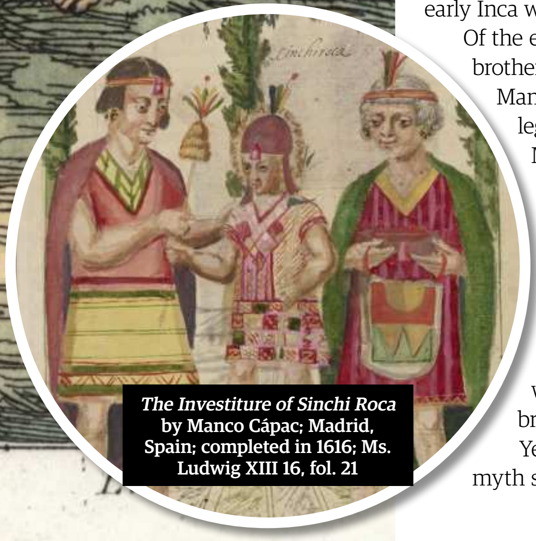
Written by Arisa Loomba

We have explored how the Incas came about, charting the coming together of history and myth, as told in past and present. But what of the Incas' first major protagonist, Manco Cápac, the son of the Sun and the guiding force of his ancestor-siblings? Fearsome and perhaps cruel, Manco is preserved in myth in worshipful remembrance. Central to Inca beliefs about the dawn of civilisation, historians are fairly convinced of his existence, yet our knowledge of him remains hazy.

Manco Cápac is said to have been the founder and first governor of the Inca people, the Sapa Inca. Born into a nomadic lifestyle in the ancient city of Tamputoco, he was of the Tambu tribe, for which his father, Apu Tambo, was a captain. When his father died Manco succeeded him, becoming the head of the ayllu (family clan, organised under a system of local government). Made up of multiple nomadic families, the city ayllu travelled on routes similar to those detailed in the origin story of Manco and his siblings, likely arriving at the Cusco Valley, where they warred with the existing tribes. Manco's tribe was small and inconsequential compared to many of the others in the valley, who saw the Inca as invaders. Time and time again, the early Inca were forced to defend their new city.

Of the eight siblings, there were the four Ayar brothers, each with a sister-wife, Manco's being Mama Ocllo (Ocllo meaning 'pure'). The legend of the Ayar brothers suggests that Manco brutally destroyed his brothers one by one, trapping them in caves or turning them to stone (much as he supposedly defeated rival tribes), leaving him as the sole leader. When his last remaining brother, Ayar Auca, died two years after their arrival in Cusco, Manco inherited all four sister-wives – a fine inheritance with which to bring forth a dynasty of 400 sons.

Yet another version of the Inca origin myth states that Manco Cápac was indeed



The Investiture of Sinchi Roca by Manco Cápac; Madrid, Spain; completed in 1616; Ms. Ludwig XIII 16, fol. 21

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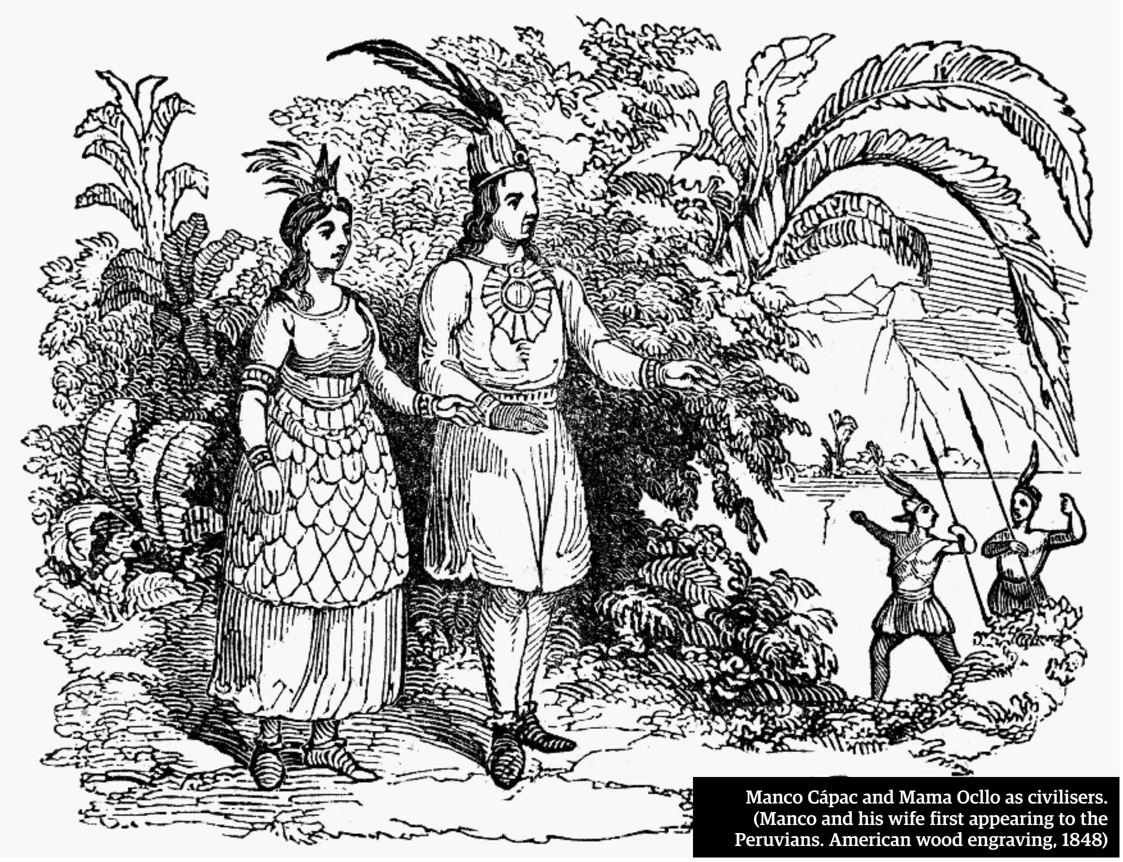
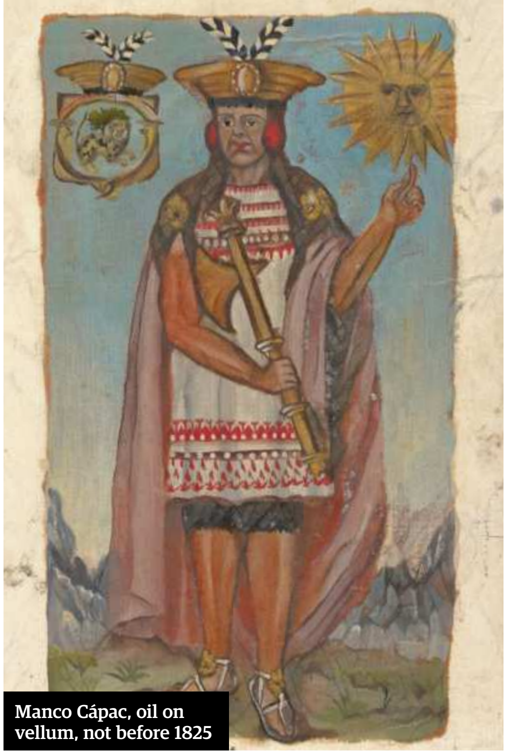


Manco Cápac and Mama Ocllo as civilisers. (Manco and his wife first appearing to the Peruvians. American wood engraving, 1848)

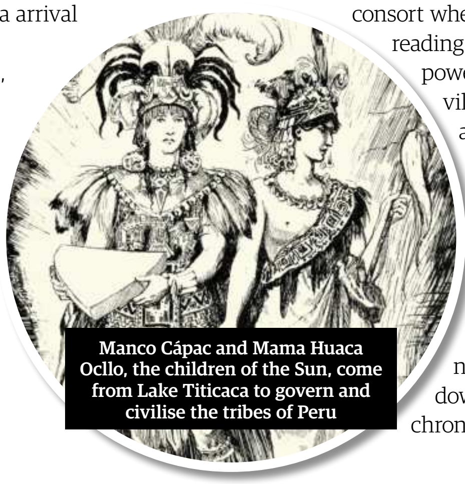


Manco Cápac, oil on vellum, not before 1825

a son of man, and that he fabricated his divine origins as the offspring of the Sun. It's said that he tricked people into worshipping him by wearing silver plates on his body that shone in the Sun atop a mountain, giving him a god-like quality.

We know some information about Manco Cápac's rule, mythical or not. He supposedly established a code of laws, abolishing human sacrifice and forbidding marriage between siblings, despite having married his own sisters. It is said that he coaxed the surrounding tribes into relative civilisation by introducing them to fire, agricultural techniques and the superior Quechua language. Perhaps Inti had taken pity on these uncivilised people and sent them deliverance through Manco Cápac and Mama Ocllo.

But as we know, it was likely that tribes in the region had previously developed sophisticated terracing techniques for the mountainous slopes and had successful agricultural yields well before the arrival of Manco and his followers. According to Burr Cartwright Brundage, the Inca arrival marked a period of extreme ethnic upheaval. These tribes, particularly the Hualla, held great disdain for Manco Cápac displacing them from their homeland of time immemorial. The anti-Inca sentiment passed down across generations was easily exploited by the Spanish many centuries later as they sought to justify their ruthless destruction of the Inca Empire.



Manco Cápac and Mama Huaca Ocllo, the children of the Sun, come from Lake Titicaca to govern and civilise the tribes of Peru

Along their journey the son of Manco and Ocllo was conceived: Sinchi Roca. Mama Ocllo was an oracle and shapeshifter of curious abilities but was loved by the people of Cusco for her beauty, making her – debatably – the true power at the heart of Manco's kingdom. There is much evidence of the centrality of Manco's sister-wives, female power supporting what is often considered the sole efforts of Manco Cápac.

Another sister-wife, Mama Huaca, is said to have arrived in the then-tropical Cusco Valley ahead of her brother, planting corn, causing a change of seasons and cultivating the region. When Manco Cápac entered, he was already worshipped as conqueror. It is speculated as to the true status of Mama Huaca. Was she Manco's sister, or was she also Manco's mother and the mighty Earth goddess known as Pachamama?

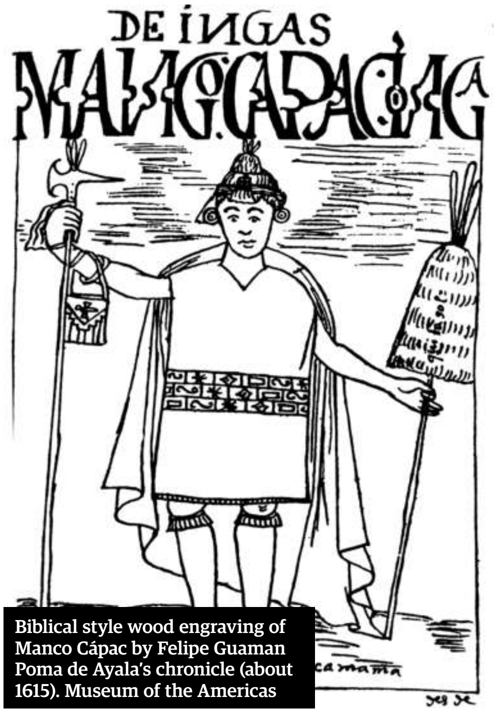
Some, prompted by Guaman Poma, believe she was descended from a race of serpents and bore Manco to a demon inside the cave from which they emerged, making him both her son and her consort when she married him. In this reading, she was promiscuous and powerful, mating with entire villages conquered by the king and queen couple Manco and Ocllo, placing two divine women at the heart of Manco's success.

The validity of these myths as legitimate according to oral Inca legend is questionable, never having been written down until 1609 by the mestizo chronicler Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, descended from both Spanish and Inca ancestors. Born in Peru but educated in Spain, he depicted Manco Cápac as an undoubted hero-king. Each time the myth was written or told some details were different. There was never a standardised account of Manco Cápac's life.

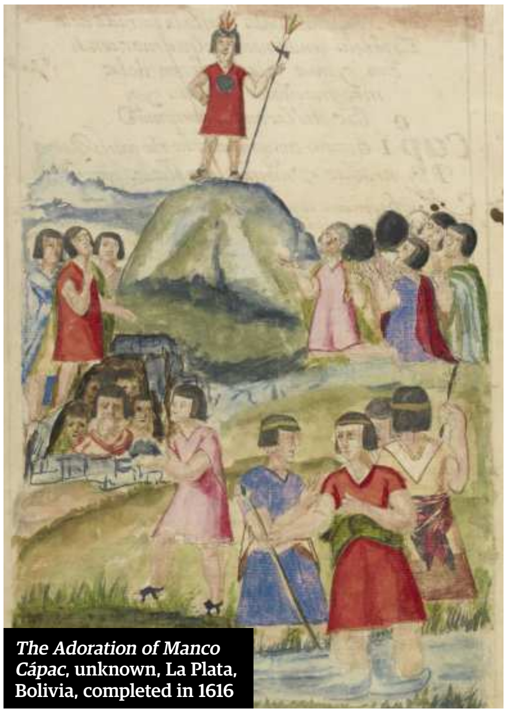
As with most ancient civilisations, particularly oral cultures, their exact origins are unknown. Indeed, the 'true' history of the Inca is still being written, if such a thing is possible. What we do know was passed down orally through the generations, or through storytelling on stone, pottery, jewellery and woven tapestry. There is an uncertain delineation between myth and history when it comes to narrating Inca history; with the passing down of oral history, there was never a discernible difference between what Western historians might see as mythical story versus historical fact. This stems from the Inca understanding of history as operating in cycles, patterns that repeat themselves, rather than a linear progression of time from the past to present. The Inca did not perceive their past in chronological terms, from one distinct ruler to another. Unproblematic according to Inca tradition, it reveals many gaps and blurry episodes when attempting to fit it to European traditions of chronological time.

The most famous of these accounts is perhaps that written by Juan de Betanzos, who was fluent in Quechua, and married the former wife of the last Inca leader, Atahualpa, who was kidnapped and killed by the Spanish in 1532. He used oral Inca sources from his wife and her family, claiming to faithfully recount history and the elasticity of time from the indigenous perspective. With further interrogation though, the motives for which Inca histories were written (that of understanding the

A statue of Manco Cápac stands proudly in Huajsapata Park, overlooking the city of Puna, Peru



Biblical style wood engraving of Manco Cápac by Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala's chronicle (about 1615). Museum of the Americas



The Adoration of Manco Cápac, unknown, La Plata, Bolivia, completed in 1616

enemy to better exterminate them) lead us to question what has been left out - or exaggerated - for Spanish readers. What could be lurking in obscurity might never be known.

Indeed, the most famous images of Manco Cápac are two colonial paintings produced by the Cusco School in the 18th and 19th centuries. The paintings position Manco against the Sun, his divine father, golden staff in hand. The first Inca is depicted within European artistic styles and norms of the time, conforming to how they would have imagined a great emperor to be, rather than how he may have appeared to the Inca people themselves. Glittering ancient civilisation to Europeans called to mind the Greeks and the Romans; myth, war, mystery and splendour. Humans at the cusp of primitive religion and triumphant civilisation.

Even the most famous Inca voice on Peruvian history was Guaman Poma, whose woodcut illustrations and written stories similarly depicted Manco, Mama Ocllo and Mama Huaca in the manner of Biblical figures and ancient European legends. Heralded as the authentic voice of the Incas, 80 years after the Spanish conquest, Poma's understanding of history was irrevocably changed by Christian tradition. Many aspects of the story of Manco Cápac are reminiscent of the origins of the world told in the Bible, and we cannot know if it was told this way before the Spanish arrival or not.

So how can we see Manco Cápac as both a historical and mythological figure beyond the Spanish colonial gaze? Can we know anything about Manco when we strip away the layers of Spanish storytelling and translation from Quechua to Spanish, oral to written? How might contemporary indigenous Peruvians view and depict their founder-ancestor; can they even do so through a lens that they can claim as their own?

Telling the story of Manco Cápac only opens up more questions, reveals more gaps in the record. One thing we do now about Manco Cápac, son of the Sun, is that he left behind an enduring legacy in which his presence is felt, if not the exact details of his life.

Manco Cápac died in his new homeland of natural causes, succeeded by his son with his sister-wife Mama Ocllo, Sinchi Roca. The Temple of the Sun was built on the very place of his death, where his mummified body was preserved and later moved to the Tiwanaku temple in Lake Titicaca. He had 400 children to continue his bloodline, leaving behind a great dynasty.

In Cusco, a statue stands in his commemoration, and an airport (Inca Manco Cápac International Airport) in the city of Juliaca bears his name, both ensuring that Peru's pre-conquest history and strength might remain at the forefront of the minds of locals and visitors.

As Spanish theologian, historian and doctor Sebastian Lorente would write in his *Historia Antigua del Peru* in 1860, Manco Cápac, the enlightened reformer, surely must have been born to Peru, for he had been imbued with the Peruvian national spirit.

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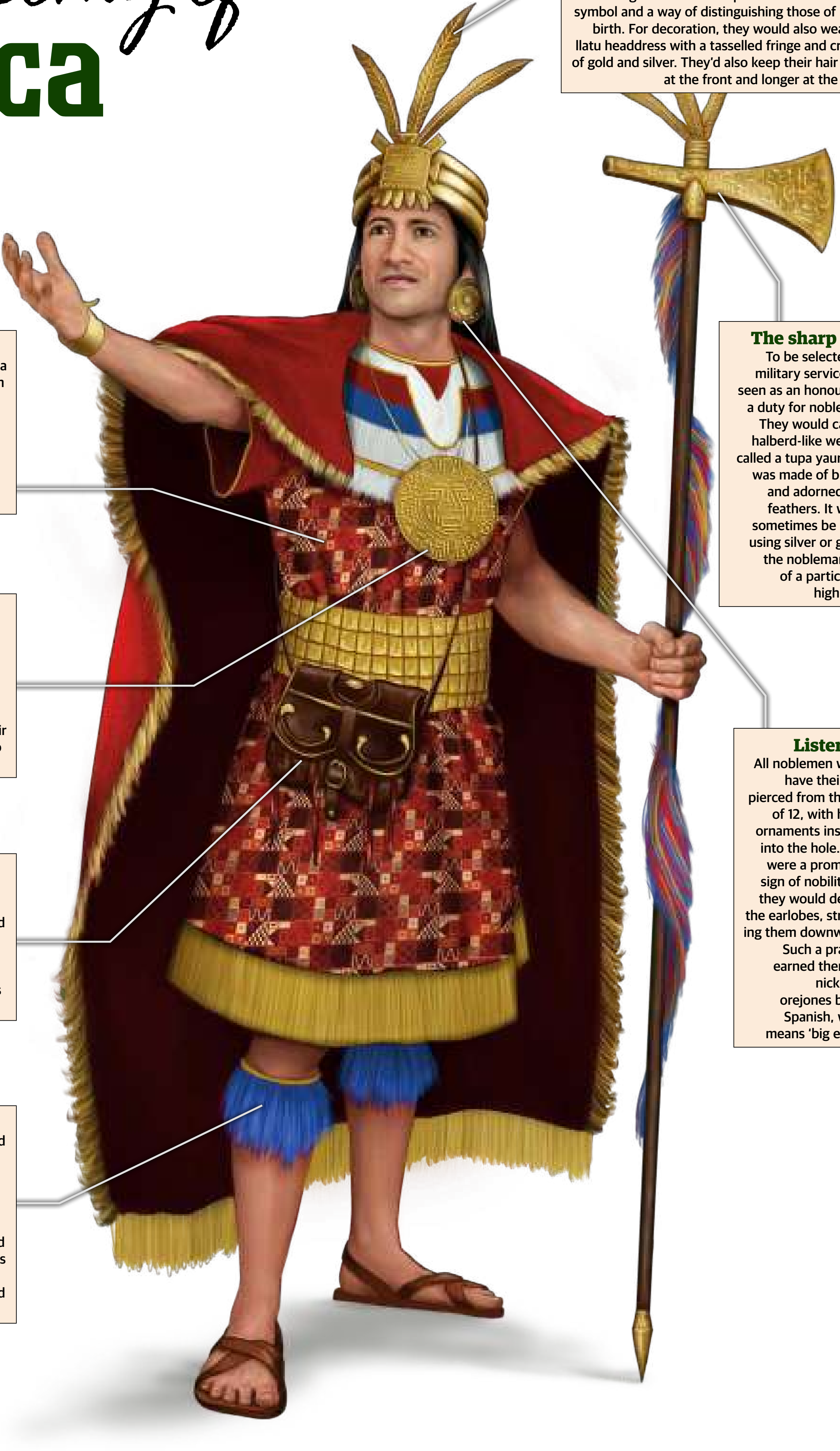
The anatomy of an Inca noble

Peru, 1400s



Lengthy tunic

Noblemen would wear a colourful tunic over a knee-length loincloth with a patterned design around the waist, while the women would wear long dresses pinned at the shoulder with a sash. The fine quality of the alpaca or vicuña cloth woven with ornamentation would indicate status. Feathers were prized decorations, and a cloak would complete the outfit in cold weather.

Going for gold

Gold jewellery was favoured among the nobles for its beauty and symbolism – it was seen as being representative of the Sun. The noblemen in particular would wear large pendants made of gold around their neck to indicate their status, and they'd place other adornments on their shoes, wrists and in their hair. Silver – symbolising the Moon – was also highly prized.

Personal effects

As well as carrying a bag for their personal items, amulets and coca leaves, a military nobleman would also have a fabric-clad shield decorated in the colours of his tribe. Most of the time, however, the nobles would work in government and administration and they'd enjoy a much better life than the commoners below them.

Little flourishes

Just below the knees and around the ankles of the noblemen would be coloured decorative fringes that were made of wool or cotton. This was indicative of the nobility's desire to appear more attractive. Their feet would be adorned with a pair of sandals that were typically made from cotton, wild plants and untanned llama hide.

Hiding a secret

Inca nobility would have their heads bound as children so that their skulls would become elongated. Such a shape was seen as a status symbol and a way of distinguishing those of noble birth. For decoration, they would also wear the llatu headdress with a tasselled fringe and crowns of gold and silver. They'd also keep their hair short at the front and longer at the back.

The sharp end

To be selected for military service was seen as an honour and a duty for noblemen. They would carry a halberd-like weapon called a tupa yauri that was made of bronze and adorned with feathers. It would sometimes be made using silver or gold if the nobleman was of a particularly high rank.

Listen up

All noblemen would have their ears pierced from the age of 12, with heavy ornaments inserted into the hole. They were a prominent sign of nobility but they would deform the earlobes, stretching them downwards. Such a practice earned them the nickname orejones by the Spanish, which means 'big eared'.

Illustration by: Kevin McGivern

UNCOVER THE SHOCKING STORY OF THE TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE

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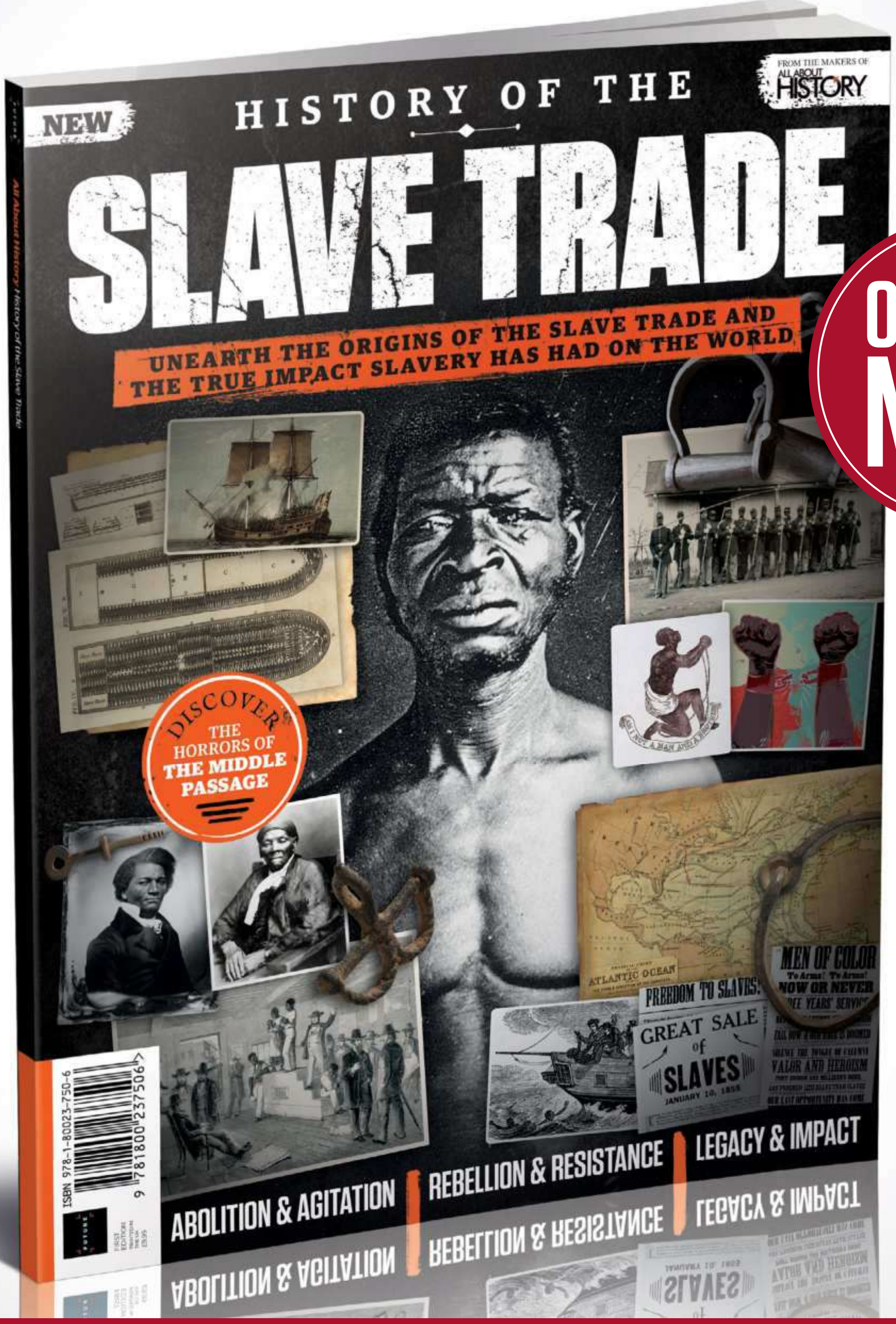
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The Earthshaker

Pachacuti, the ninth Inca monarch, expanded the empire's boundaries and forged a cohesive and tightly governed state

Written by Marc DeSantis

Tawantinsuyu

The empire of the Inca began small, eventually growing to encompass a vast area containing numerous alien peoples. Starting with the city of Cusco, nestled in an upland Andean valley in modern Peru, the Inca expanded relentlessly from their home base until they had become masters of a gigantic realm. They called their state Tawantinsuyu, meaning 'the Land of the Four Quarters' in their native language of Quechua. It was an appropriate moniker, as it came to stretch from Quito in modern-day Ecuador in the north to the Rio Maule in modern Chile in the south and embraced large portions of what are today sections of Peru, Argentina and Bolivia. Its population would reach approximately 10 million.

The Inca themselves were not barbarians who left only destruction in their wake. They established a sophisticated system of administration for a state that was connected by well-maintained roads. Tawantinsuyu would become the biggest polity in the Americas in the years prior to Columbus.

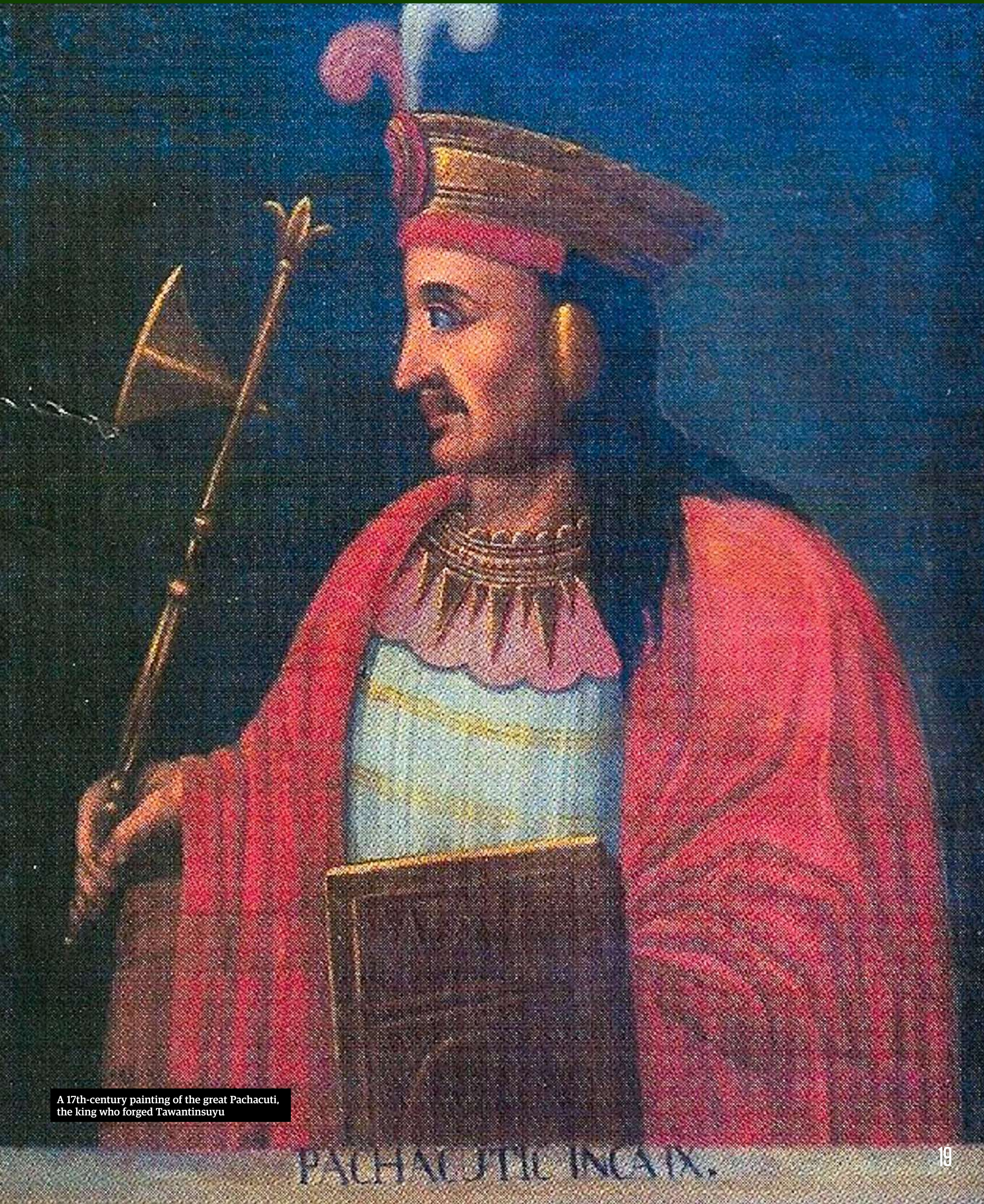
The lion's share of the credit for the building of Tawantinsuyu must go to the ninth Inca leader, Yupanqui, better known to history by his throne name of Pachacuti - Earthshaker. The name was entirely justified, as Pachacuti would indeed shake the whole of the Andean world when he came to power in the early 15th century.

An Inca prince

The origins of the Inca can be traced back to approximately two centuries before Pachacuti, to around the year 1200. They were an Andean mountain people who held that their city, Cusco, had been built by their first monarch, Manco Cápac. One of the leading deities of the Inca was the Sun god Inti, who would play a leading role in the foundation of Tawantinsuyu.

Inca tradition held that Inti showed himself one day to the young Yupanqui (c. 1418-1471) when he was still a prince and not even in the direct royal succession to the throne. His brother Urco had previously been gifted with the honour of being named heir by their mutual father, Viracocha Inca, the current ruler of the Inca kingdom. Urco was for all intents and purposes the junior king. Yupanqui's vision of Inti was so startling - Inti's arms were wrapped round with snakes - that he ran from the god in fear. Inti called to him and told him that he would one day conquer many nations. The god then proceeded to reveal to Yupanqui the many places that would fall to him in the future by means of a magic mirror.

Notwithstanding the revelation, Yupanqui's immediate succession prospects remained dim. That would soon change. Urco, perhaps the victim of Yupanqui's own subsequent propaganda, was said to show little interest in governing, instead devoting his attention to a harem of women. Urco, though in line to inherit, was not worthy of his position as heir to the empire. Shirking his duties, he made his brother Yupanqui responsible for overseeing Cusco while he left to immerse himself in more pleasant undertakings. By this time their father Viracocha had stepped back from his royal duties and left Urco in charge of the capital. He was


PACHACUTIC INCA IX.

A 17th-century painting of the great Pachacuti, the king who forged Tawantinsuyu now spending his days in the steep fortress of Pisac located in the nearby Sacred Valley (the Urubamba River Valley).

The sloth of Urco, leaving Cusco rudderless, dismayed several of the Incas' leading generals. These warriors wanted to conquer the lands about Cusco, and Urco's disinterest did not sit well with them. A conspiracy of around 20 formed among these generals to depose him. With both co-kings gone from Cusco, there would be relatively little to stop them.

However, this did not mean that there would be no threats emerging from the outside. The Chanca were hostile mountaineers from the region of Choclococha. They were neighbours of the Quechua (the Inca were themselves a Quechua-speaking people) and were expanding their territory in the early 15th century. The success of the Chanca, which included a resounding victory over the Quechua, brought them within striking distance of Cusco.

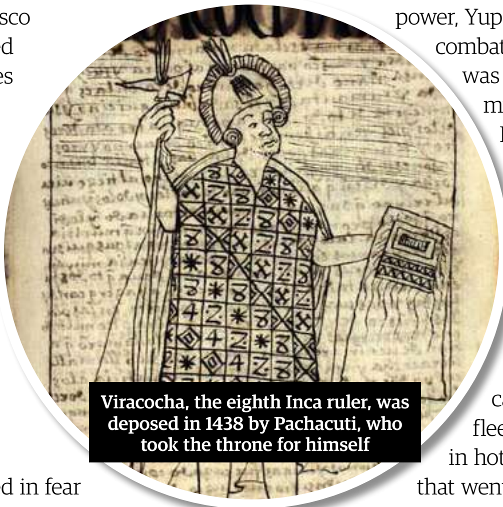
In 1438, a large Chanca army moved against Cusco, stopping at the Pass of Vilcaconga to call for the Inca to surrender. Both Viracocha and Urco hurried back to Cusco, but stayed only long enough to arrange a wholesale, and deeply embarrassing, evacuation to the Yucay Valley.

With this crisis breaking, the coup plotters had to move. Either they would leave with the co-kings and share in their fate, or they could put forward their own candidate and seek outright victory. Selecting the latter course, the man they chose as their leader was Yupanqui.

"Instead of taking refuge inside the fort above Cusco, Yupanqui met the Chanca in the field: he would not abandon the city"

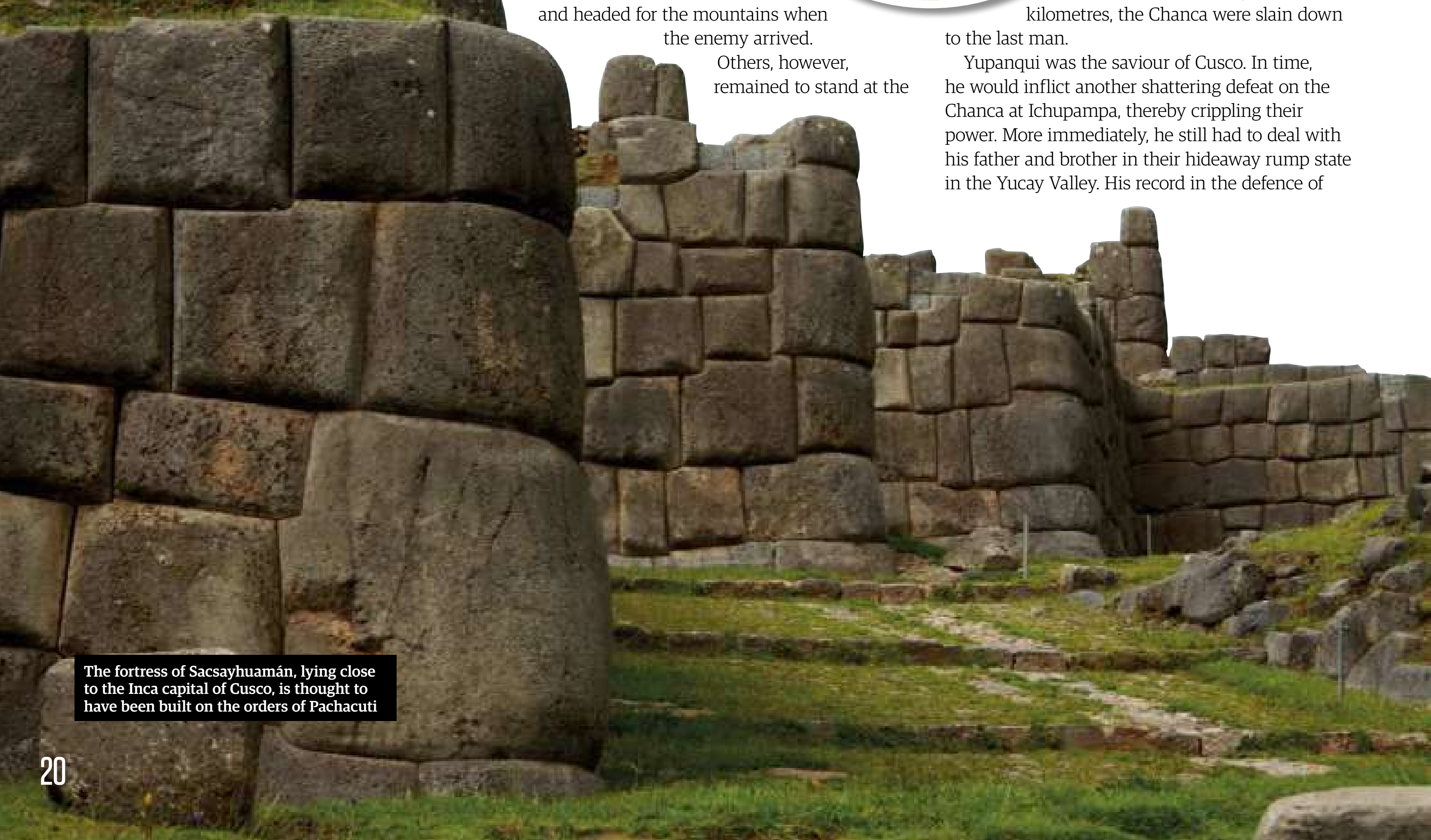
Desperate for more soldiers, Yupanqui cast around, seeking them wherever he could find them. Other peoples also threatened by the Chanca expansion, such as the Quechua, the Aymara and Cotapampa, answered the prince's summons. Mercenaries, too, were hired from among the Cana and the Cancha. The army that would stand with Yupanqui at Cusco was thus a hastily organised collection of disparate forces with only a slight prospect of success. Meanwhile, the fierce Chanca army closed on Cusco.

The Chanca assault soon began in earnest, but the Inca received early warning when a spy brought them news of their movement. Nonetheless, not all were steeled against the appearance of the Chanca. Some of the inhabitants fled in fear and headed for the mountains when the enemy arrived. Others, however, remained to stand at the side of their resolute commander. Instead of taking refuge inside the fort above Cusco, Yupanqui met the Chanca in the field: he would not abandon the city as had his father and brother. The first day's battle was indecisive, but Yupanqui received some reinforcements. The second morning saw the Chanca renew their attack, sending their army against the beleaguered city garrison. Wearing about his shoulders the skin of a puma, a creature revered among the Inca for its ferocious power, Yupanqui led his soldiers into combat in person. What ensued was a frightful battle, with so much blood spilled that the Inca came to call it the Yahuar Pampa: the Field of Blood.


Viracocha, the eighth Inca ruler, was deposed in 1438 by Pachacuti, who took the throne for himself

At some point, the Chanca were gripped by panic. Perhaps they had lost all hope of overcoming Yupanqui and his warriors. Whatever the cause, they were the ones to flee, with the Inca following in hot pursuit. During a chase that went on for nine gore-stained kilometres, the Chanca were slain down to the last man.

Yupanqui was the saviour of Cusco. In time, he would inflict another shattering defeat on the Chanca at Ichupampa, thereby crippling their power. More immediately, he still had to deal with his father and brother in their hideaway rump state in the Yucay Valley. His record in the defence of


The fortress of Sacsayhuamán, lying close to the Inca capital of Cusco, is thought to have been built on the orders of Pachacuti

A portion of the ruins of the fortress of Pisac in the Sacred Valley

the kingdom was undeniably far superior to those of his father and brother, and he had earned his peoples' adoration. Urco was labelled an outlaw, and he eventually died while fighting against Yupanqui's loyalists.

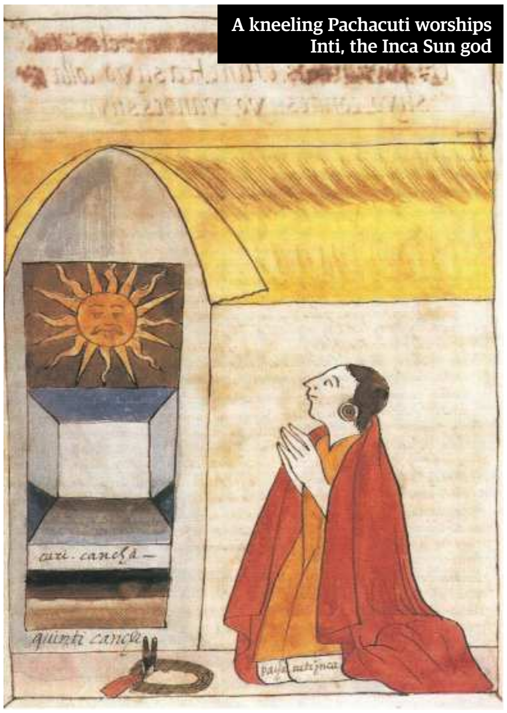
The victorious prince compelled Viracocha to give up the throne and took the kingship for himself, becoming the ninth Inca ruler. It was at his coronation that he took for himself his throne name of Pachacuti, the 'Earthshaker.' Viracocha was publicly humiliated by being made to drink Chicha (a common Inca beverage created by the chewing of maize (corn) kernels, with the resulting mash then allowed to ferment) from a dirty pot used to hold excrement. With his feckless father's dignity stripped away, Pachacuti was now the unchallenged ruler of the realm.

Expanding the empire

Pachacuti would not rest content with the assumption of the kingship. In line with Inti's vision, he embarked upon a series of military campaigns that ultimately pushed out the boundaries of the Inca Empire further north into the Andean highlands of Peru and into the south to the shores of Lake Titicaca, which today lies on the modern border between Peru and Bolivia.

Pachacuti's campaigns were to take on a different character from those of his predecessors. The latter had been more used to unleashing raids that involved the taking of loot and ended with a return to the Inca homeland. Now, war would be conducted for more than the acquisition of mere goods: it would enable permanent expansion. Pachacuti would also extend the sway of Inca culture, something that was in keeping with the practices of many empires elsewhere in the world. This would serve to bind other peoples more closely to the Inca.

To ease the way for his conquests, Pachacuti could be both frightening as well as conciliatory. He knew how useful terror was as a tool to compel his opponents to submit. Yet he heightened the allure of a peaceful surrender to him by granting gifts and honours to foreign enemies who willingly accepted him as their overlord. Again, this policy was in line with pragmatic imperial practices deployed elsewhere in the world.



A kneeling Pachacuti worships Inti, the Inca Sun god

© McKay Savage CC BY 2.0 (fortress Cusco)

Forts of Tawantinsuyu

The Inca guarded the heartland of their growing empire with several forts of impressive size and sophistication

Lofty Machu Picchu was an Inca fortress lost for centuries, most probably because it was made obsolete by the further expansion of the Inca Empire

The Inca Empire was a huge entity, encompassing approximately 3 million square kilometres and containing around 10 million inhabitants. The task of securing this empire, which the Inca themselves called 'Tawantinsuyu', was a formidable one. Ruling from their capital city of Cusco, the Inca relied on a system of fortifications, knit by a roadway network of some 30,000 kilometres in length, to control their vast domain.

Among the most important fortresses protecting the core Inca lands was the one that stood at Sacsayhuamán. Said to have been built at the insistence of the ninth Inca ruler, Pachacuti, it was most likely the biggest of the Inca forts. It lay in close proximity to Cusco, and was constructed of large, cyclopean stones. Set atop a round, steep-sided hill, the fortress was gifted with three tall towers and three zigzagging multi-level defensive terraces. The Spaniards who conquered the Inca Empire in the 16th century, themselves experts in fortifications, were extremely impressed by it.

Elsewhere, in the Sacred Valley, which was of prime strategic valley to the Inca, were positioned two other grand fortifications. At one end, about 60 kilometres away from Cusco, rose Pisac. This fort stood sentinel over a gorge astride the Vilcanota River (a section of the Urubamba River) and was more accurately a collection of structures, including towers, defensive terraces, barracks and other buildings standing guard over the gorge.

A bit further off, at the other end of the Sacred Valley, about 74 kilometres from Cusco, was Ollantaytambo. Like Pisac, it was protected by defensive terraces, of which there were 11. High walls were raised on Ollantaytambo's northwest face where its natural defences were lacking.

Machu Picchu, some 112 kilometres from Cusco, guarded the Urubamba River Valley from the top of a lofty mountain. Like Pisac and Ollantaytambo, it too was given defensive terraces and walls, as well as a dry moat. Machu Picchu is notable for having been 'lost' for centuries. It is conjectured that it may have been constructed by Pachacuti himself, and also that it was abandoned as the tide of Inca conquests rendered its strategic importance null. The fortress was to be rediscovered only in 1911.

Ruling the empire

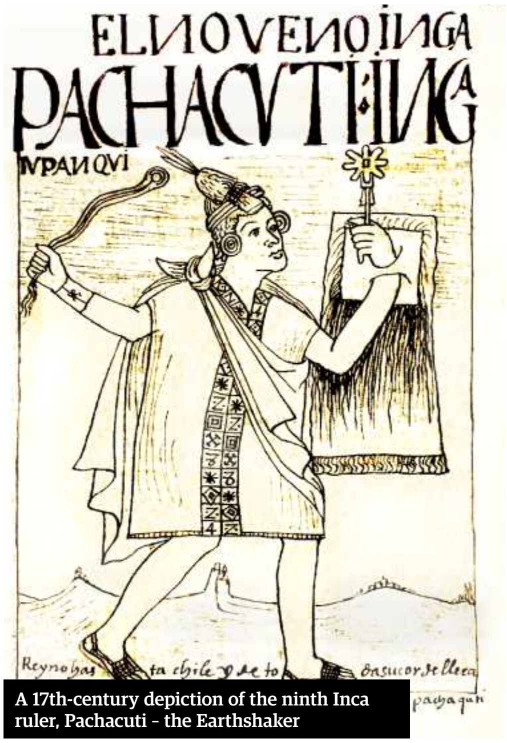
Pachacuti understood that governing an empire was a task just as weighty as that of winning it. In 1463, he relinquished command of the Inca armies in favour of his son Topa Inca so that he could direct all of his energies into imperial governance.

Preventing uprisings was of tremendous importance in a state that contained so many newly conquered peoples who would have easily remembered the days of their independence. To forestall rebellion, Pachacuti's cultural policy was one of accommodation. Defeated nations would keep their deities, and in return Pachacuti demanded that they include the worship of Inti in their own religious practices.

Pachacuti's policies were not all pleasant, however. He made use of mass deportations, as many other empires did before and after, to move potentially defiant peoples to other areas of the empire where they could, in theory, do less harm. Into their vacated homelands Pachacuti would subsequently put new, loyal inhabitants. These arrivals were sometimes also expected to assist in policing these lands and could be charged with frontier defence.

> "Under Inca law, the penalties for transgressions could be quite dire. An eye might be removed for the offence of treason, if death itself was not meted out"

Pachacuti was himself deemed part divine given that he claimed descent from Inti for himself. He certainly travelled in grand style, as befitted such an absolute monarch. He was borne about in a golden litter to emphasise his superiority and the distance between him and even his mightiest subjects. Those who approached him had to do so barefoot, with their eyes averted. All who came close to him also had to bear a small burden of some kind on their backs as a sign of respect for the Inca emperor.



A 17th-century depiction of the ninth Inca ruler, Pachacuti – the Earthshaker

Like all other empires, that of the Inca insisted on the payment of taxes by their subjects. Every area of the empire was subject to a yearly census, and this determined the amount of tax due. Since the Inca did not have a monetary economy – there was no money among the Inca – taxes were paid in kind – that is, by the provision of goods and services by the people. All of the land of the empire, and everything on it, was apportioned into thirds. The people would tend one-third for their own personal benefit; the second was tended for the Inca monarch; and the final part was worked on behalf of the gods, with the priesthoods taking possession of the produce. Personal property among the Inca was limited in scope. Such items included tools, clothing and jewellery.

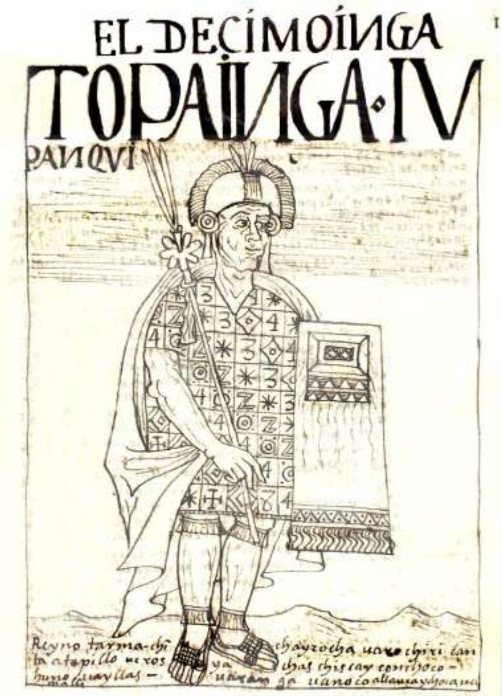
The common people did not toil and pay tax for no benefit to themselves. Food security, always precarious in a pre-industrial, agricultural society, was enhanced by the creation of storehouses, known as qollqas, in provincial cities. Into these qollqas went a portion of the annual harvest. Poor widows, the sick, orphans and others in need could obtain food distributions from them.

To slow the spread of luxury, which was a sure step on the road to the corruption of his subjects, Pachacuti forbade the wearing of feathered ornaments or garments made from vicuna wool, and restricted them to the consumption of the single beverage of Chicha. In compensation, Pachacuti allowed his subjects three days of holiday with the coming of the new Moon.

Pachacuti's legal measures were designed to ensure that lawbreaking, no matter how trivial the offence, would be punished. He was so intent on ensuring this, and also that an accused person would be given his due rights during the implementation of justice, that he would intervene on occasion himself to make certain this was done. He also set down the specific penalties that would be administered for each kind of crime.

Under Inca law, the penalties for transgressions could be quite dire. An eye might be removed for the offence of treason, if death itself was not meted out. Adulterers might be tortured or even stoned to death. Theft was a capital offence.

Sloth could also be a punishable offence, with whipping, and perhaps execution, being the prescribed punishments.



Topa Inca, Pachacuti's successor, continued his father's run of imperial conquests across the Andean region

The emperor also took a deep interest in economic matters. His primary goal was to encourage increased food production. However, now that Tawantinsuyu had come to embrace so many peoples speaking different languages, it proved difficult to administer, even for dedicated Inca officials. There was therefore unavoidable miscommunication between the officials and the common farmers, who spoke myriad tongues.

Pachacuti's solution to this problem was to give his empire a standard language – his own – Quechua, so that its inhabitants could communicate with one another more readily. To enhance the spread of Quechua, he sent native Quechua-speakers into the provinces, there to learn the local languages while at the same time instructing the local peoples in the use of the Quechuan language.

Final days

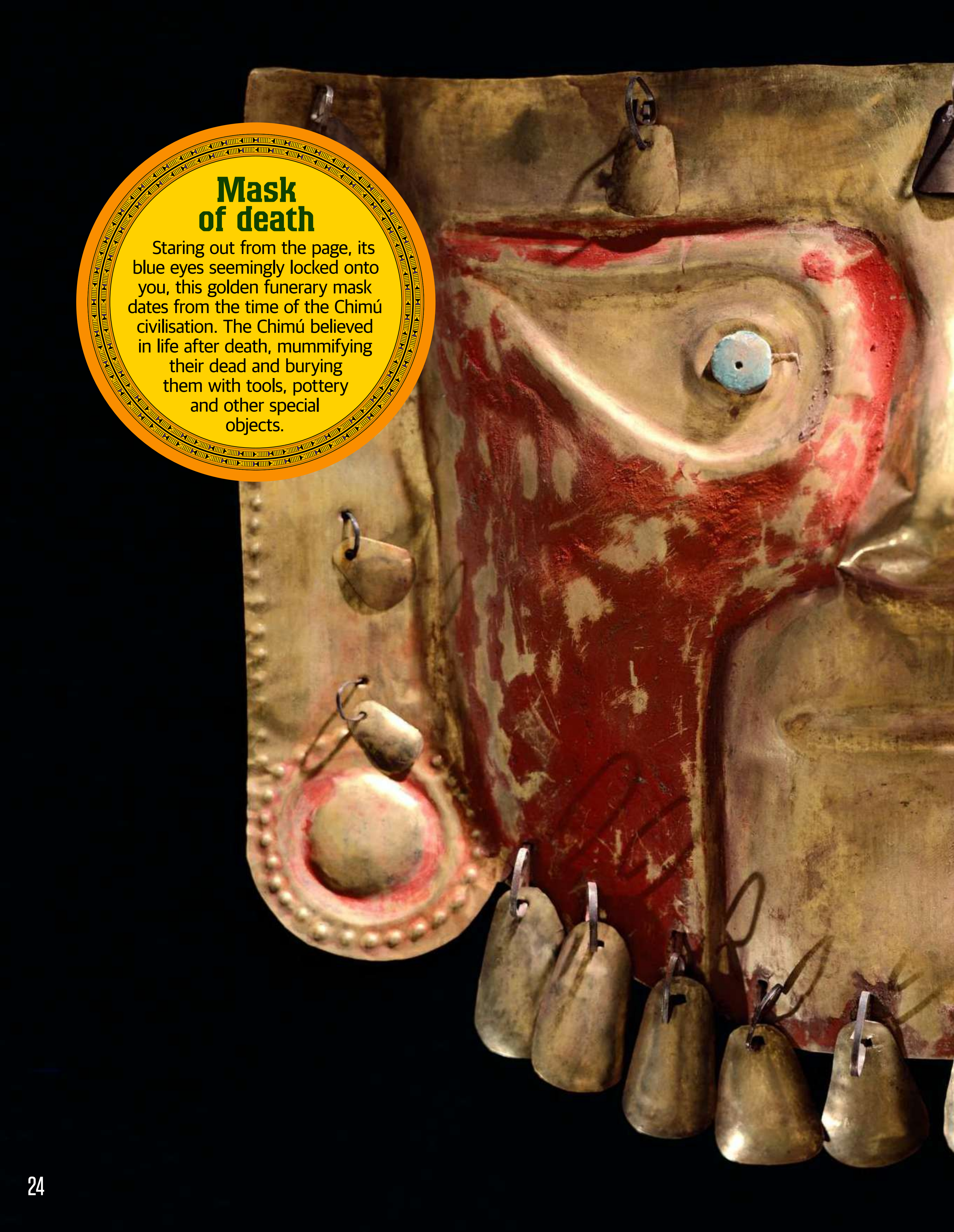
No one lives forever, not even an Inca emperor. Pachacuti died in 1471, leaving his son Topa Inca to guide the empire. Topa would expand the empire even further afield than had his mighty father. Tawantinsuyu would stand as the greatest state in the Americas until the arrival of the Spanish in the 16th century.

As the Inca did not make use of a system of writing, the history we have of Pachacuti derives mainly from Inca oral tradition and stories later recorded by the Spaniards who occupied his former lands. The accuracy of the many tales concerning Pachacuti and his activities are thereby difficult to assess.

Nonetheless, it is clear that Pachacuti's achievements were immense and that he deserves to be ranked among the world's greatest monarchs. The Earthshaker left behind him a state that was vast, powerful and carefully governed. Few rulers throughout history could ever claim to have done the same.

The Sacred Valley was a hugely important route into and out of the Cusco region and was guarded by major fortresses at either end

© Pedro Szekely CC BY-SA 2.0 (Machu Picchu), Emmanuel Dayn CC BY 2.0 (Sacred Valley)



Mask of death

Staring out from the page, its blue eyes seemingly locked onto you, this golden funerary mask dates from the time of the Chimú civilisation. The Chimú believed in life after death, mummifying their dead and burying them with tools, pottery and other special objects.

Machu Picchu

The City In The Sky

How one of the world's most mysterious historical sites came to be, and then fell to ruin

Written by Alex Hoskins

Hiram Bingham had exhausted the advice given to him about where to look for the lost city long ago. He had taken to being led up rocky tracks and through undergrowth and even to the edge of danger in search of Vilcabamba Viejo, but few of these journeys had given him any real hope of finding the notorious Peruvian lost city of the Inca. However, on 23 July 1911, a local farmer named Melchor Arteaga told Bingham, through his Quechua interpreter, that there were extensive ruins in the mountains, untouched by experts. Machu Picchu, meaning 'old peak', was the place, he said, as he pointed to the cloud-covered mountains looming behind Bingham.

The next morning, through a thick film of drizzle and further up into the thinning air, Arteaga led Bingham and his interpreter up the old mountain. The rest of the expedition crew, including Yale's best archaeologists, had declined to take yet another trip into the unknown for potentially little reward. After a gruelling hike up the treacherous pathways, they came to a hut used by local farmers. Arteaga spoke to a young boy, who then gestured to Bingham and the others to follow him. Just a few moments' walk from the hut, they trudged through rain-drenched foliage and saw it for the first time: the ruined city of Machu Picchu.

Straight in front of them, hundreds of feet long, they saw magnificent rows of stone houses, abandoned centuries ago and left to ruin but still undoubtedly a former scene of civilised life. Bingham knew it was Inca stonework, unmistakable even beneath the vines and trees that had begun to encase it since abandonment. This, surely, was the place they had come to find, and Vilcabamba Viejo was no longer lost. But it was not the place Bingham thought it was. This was arguably something much more important. The city he was searching for, Vilcabamba Viejo,

01

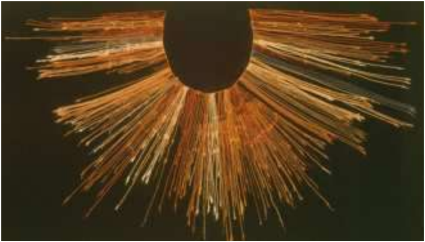
Why was it built?

Theory: **As a nunnery for the Virgins of the Sun**

Some 100 skeletons were excavated from Machu Picchu, and osteologist George Eaton found about three-quarters of them to be female. This sparked the theory that the city was for the Virgins of the Sun, a holy order of women dedicated to the Inca Sun god Inti. However, modern analysis found half of the skeletons were male.

Treasures of Machu Picchu

The artefacts found are key to our fascination with the site and its people



Quipu
Without written language, the Inca created an ingenious system of administration for people and goods – the quipu, a system of knotted strings. The type of knot represented a number, and the distance between them multiples of ten, 100 or 1,000.

Aryballos
The aryballos was a large jug-style container most often used for carrying liquids and oils. With a conical base, it could be implanted in the ground for storage. These were often decorated with oxidised orange pigment and geometric patterns.

Bizmuth bronze ceremonial knives

Found by Hiram Bingham during excavations and unique to the site of Machu Picchu, this artefact is remarkable for its use of bismuth bronze and is one of the earliest examples of the copper alloy in use.

Ceremonial pot
Unearthed in 2012, it seems there is plenty still to be learned from Machu Picchu. This pot is a relic of Chimú culture, dating back 1,000 years. It is thought to be an offering made to Machu Picchu itself.

Mummies
Found near Machu Picchu, in Túpac Amaru, these mummified remains indicate that the preservation of dead bodies was part of Inca culture. Some bundles even contained more than one skeleton.

was one he had actually already found and dismissed, thinking it was not grand enough, at Espiritu Pampa. Bingham may have died believing that the site he found at Machu Picchu was Vilcabamba Viejo, but the ruins and artefacts he found there have arguably given more in terms of understanding Inca society than any other, and it remains a very popular site in its own right, as people are drawn to the myriad unexplained aspects of its history.

Located 80 kilometres northwest of Cusco, high in the Andes Mountains, the site of Machu Picchu looks down on the Urubamba River. It nestles 2,350 metres high, between two higher peaks, Machu Picchu, from which it takes its name, and Huayna Picchu ('old' and 'new' peak respectively). It was at this precise spot that our most valuable insight into Inca civilisation was found, but how had this extensive and clearly archaeologically important site gone untouched by explorers, historians and even the ransacking of Spanish conquistadors until now? Bingham had hit the jackpot, but the fascinating treasure trove of Inca history brought with it just as many questions as it gave insights into the ancient civilisation – the biggest and most pressing of which was just who had built this incredible site and why?

02

Why was it built?

Theory: As a fortress

The abundance of strong structures such as walls, towers and defences, including dry moats, led to the theory that Machu Picchu was built as a citadel. The need for a citadel may have been due to excessive droughts, turning water into a prized resource. This also allows for the abandonment of Machu Picchu, on the basis that water had become available elsewhere.

In the following years, and indeed decades, since the discovery, theories have abounded. The Inca did not develop a written form of communication and so left behind no codes that could be the key to our understanding. From assumptions of religious significance to pondering what sort of conflict might have called for a high-altitude fortress, any and every plausible theory was considered. As modern science has allowed for far more accurate analysis of the remains that were found, including about 200 skeletons, some of these have been discredited, such as the site being a monastery for the Virgins of the Sun, and today it is most widely believed that the site was built on the orders of the emperor Pachacuti to serve as a secondary residence and governmental outpost.

Pachacuti was an expert builder of the empire and one who relished the idea of building a city that would consolidate his stronghold across Peru and to the edge of the Bolivian borders. Pachacuti is often compared to Philip II of Macedonia because of his appetite for Inca expansion, and throughout his rule between 1438 and 1471 he significantly expanded the Inca Empire. With the help of his son and successor, Túpac Inca Yupanqui, Inca society spread its powerful reach out into what is now modern-day southern Peru and upwards to Quito in Ecuador.

Their methods of conquest were not always violent or aggressive, instead using cunning and negotiation as a tool to add new communities to the Inca Empire rather than taking them by force (although this was an option that Pachacuti certainly wouldn't discount if a region was resistant to striking a deal – he was no soft touch).

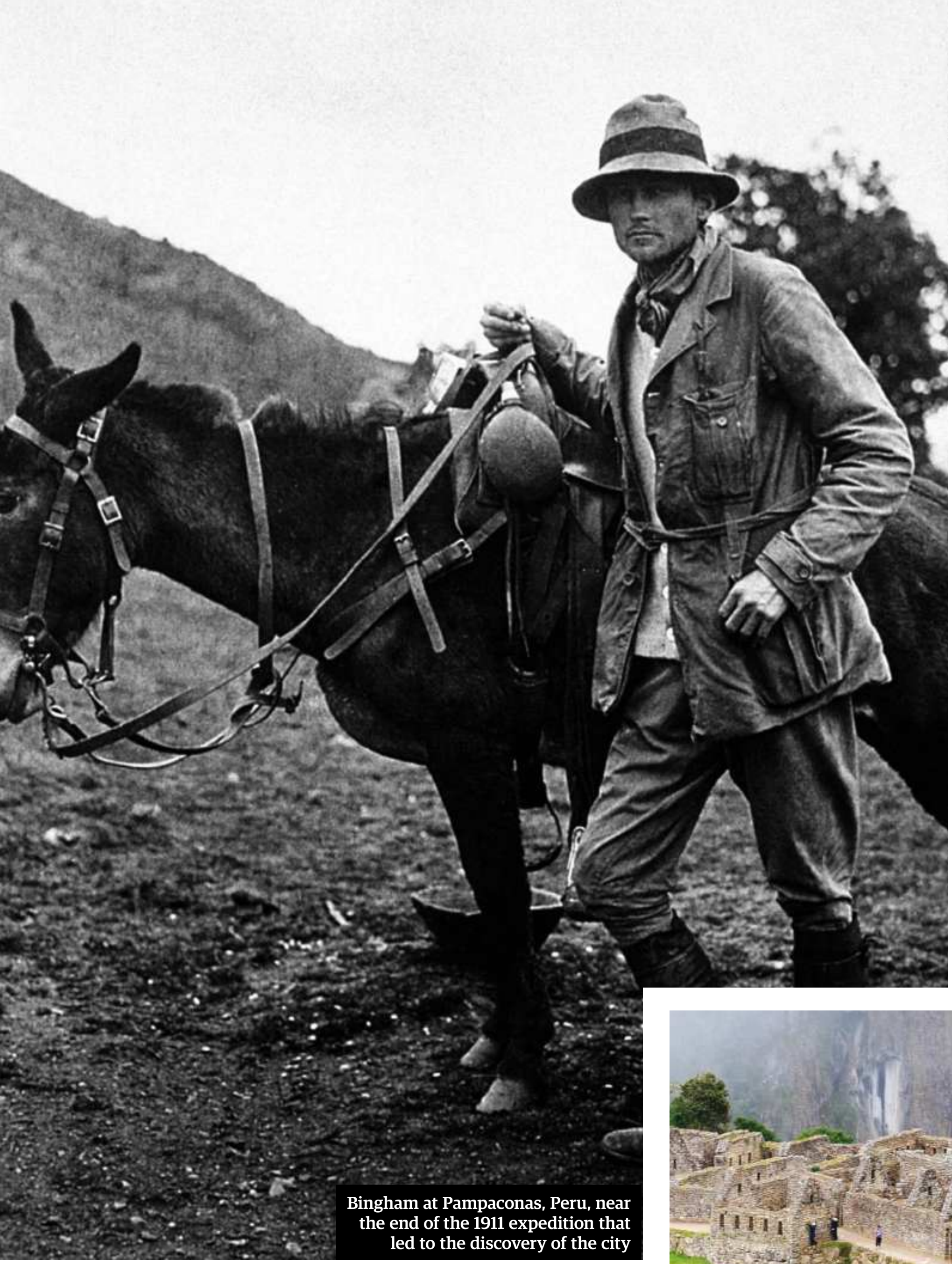
Joining the Inca 'confederation' could offer plenty of benefits for a community, such as access to luxury goods and trade, not to mention valuable passage along the remarkable Inca road system, spanning over 30,000 kilometres across South America. In return, Pachacuti's empire would benefit from the land, goods and services available in that region.

As soon as Hiram Bingham saw the buildings at Machu Picchu he knew them to be Inca structures. The engineering prowess of the Inca was so impressive and revolutionary that they have been called 'the Romans of the New World', and at Machu Picchu some of the most exceptional examples of their work still stand. The absence of mortar between stones and the uniform custom-cut bricks that form the buildings at Machu Picchu are typically Inca techniques. By not using mortar, the buildings were able to move slightly without crumbling, an ingenious defence against the frequent earthquakes that affect the region. To make up for the lack of mortar, the stones were cut so precisely as to fit together tightly like a jigsaw, and without modern machinery, this work was done by hand.

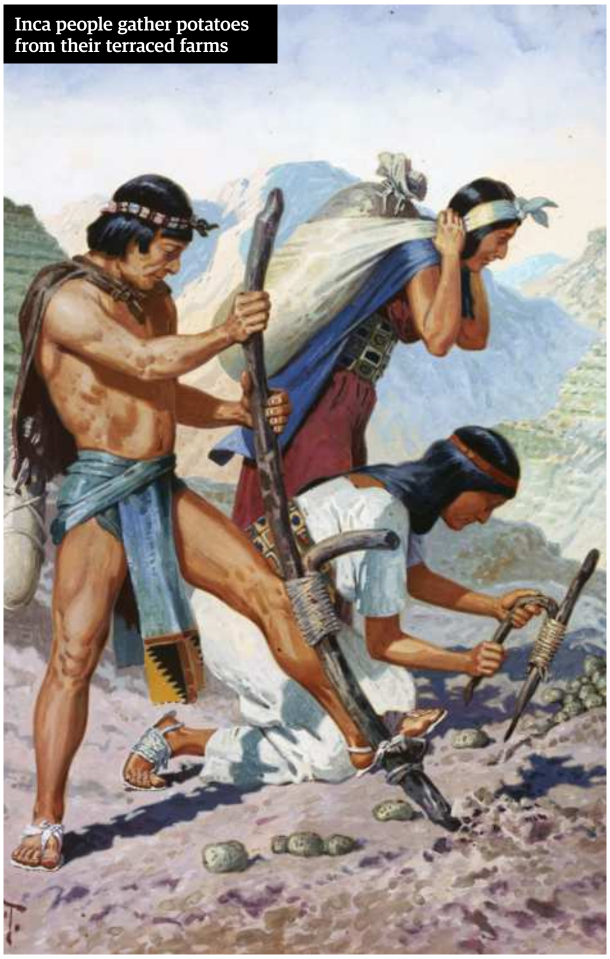
Huge numbers of uniform granite bricks were crafted, most likely by chipping away at slabs of stone with another rock. However, finding a rock tool strong enough wouldn't have been easy, as although granite fractures readily enough, it is a material far stronger than even concrete, and repeated striking of the rock would weaken most tools to breaking point.

The significant rainfall that Machu Picchu attracts also made the site more susceptible to mudslides, and the rock chippings that resulted from the crafting of the bricks were used to aid drainage, providing a resourceful and convenient solution to the regular wet weather. Machu Picchu's buildings continue to be examined by engineers today as they seek to improve the construction of buildings in earthquake-stricken areas across the globe. Where modern structures may crumble, Machu Picchu has stood strong for centuries.

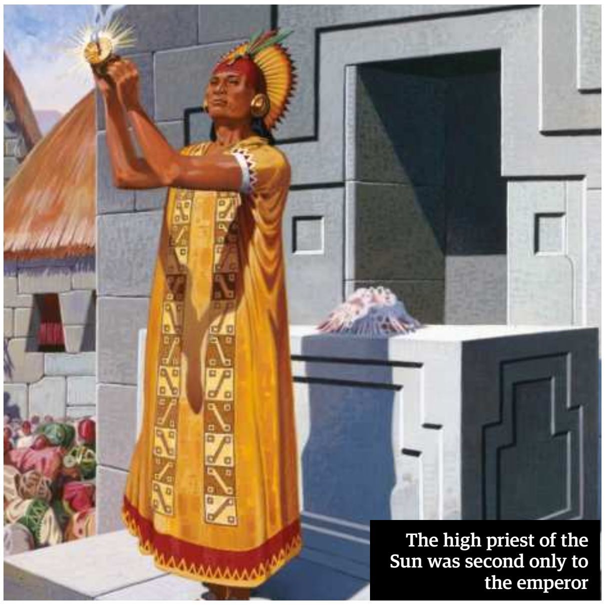
We may not know exactly who was tasked with the repetitive, laborious work of chipping away at granite blocks, but what is clear is that Pachacuti must have had plenty of workers at his disposal.



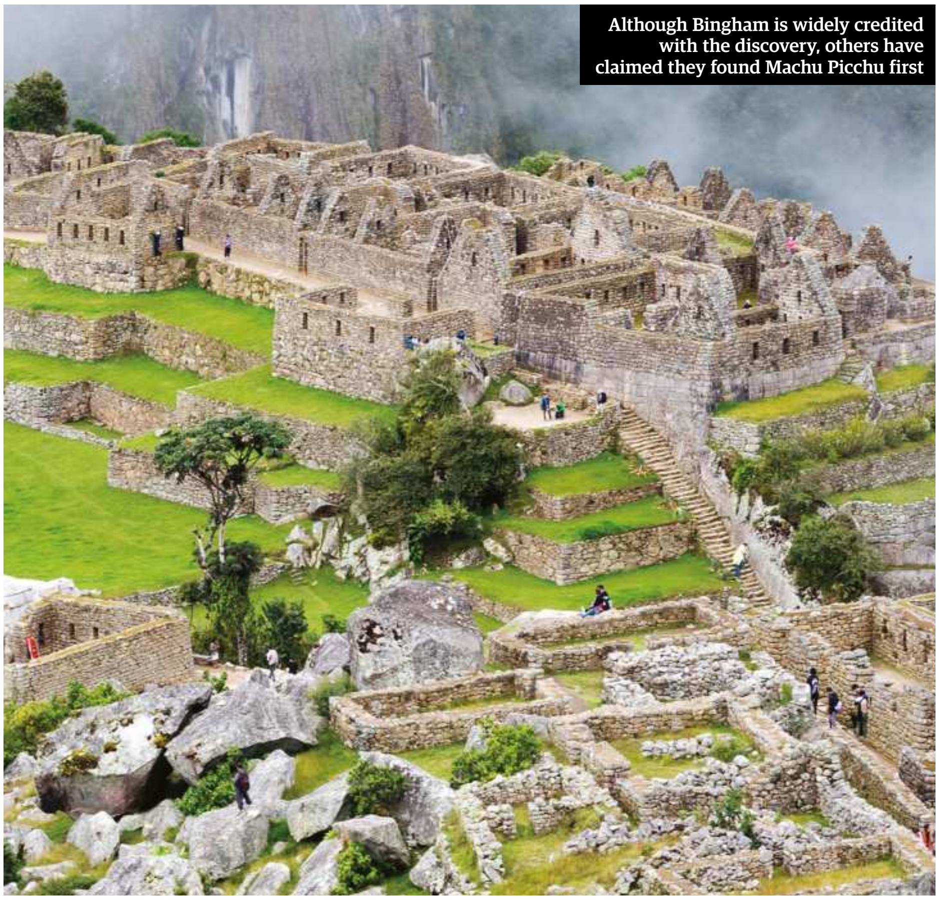
Bingham at Pampaconas, Peru, near the end of the 1911 expedition that led to the discovery of the city



Inca people gather potatoes from their terraced farms



The high priest of the Sun was second only to the emperor

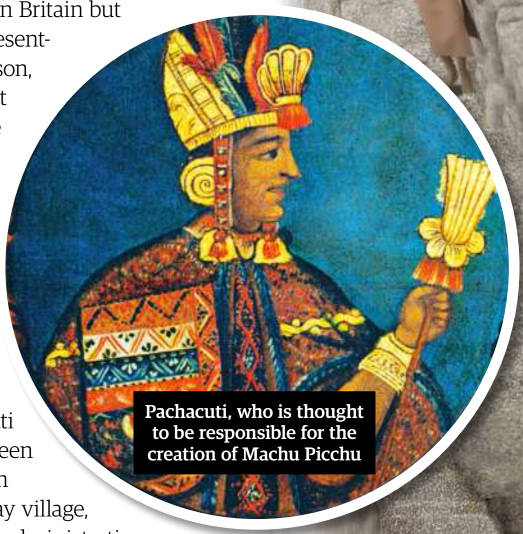


Although Bingham is widely credited with the discovery, others have claimed they found Machu Picchu first

Estimates put the figure of labourers working on the construction of the city at about 5,000 people, remarkable considering that it would go on to accommodate just 1,000 residents when built. What happened to the rest of the workers when the city was ready is, like much of the story of Machu Picchu, still a mystery. Buildings for various uses make up the site, including a guard house, prison, temples for worship of the Sun and animals, and water fountains, but by far the most prevalent type of building on the site is housing. For an insight into who exactly built the structures, perhaps those who inhabited them are our best chance at discovering the truth.

Many of the city's 1,000 inhabitants, if not most, would have been yanacona, the servants of the Inca upper classes. As this was a royal retreat, the yanacona were tasked with making sure that everything was just as Pachacuti desired. This would have included tending the crops that were so neatly laid out across Machu Picchu's agricultural terraces, personally waiting on Pachacuti and other members of the Inca elite, handling administration of the city, taking charge of the upkeep of the buildings, and generally serving the upper classes. The city would likely have functioned in a similar way to a stately home in Victorian Britain but on a larger scale, or perhaps a present-day royal residence - in comparison, Buckingham Palace keeps almost 200 staff, so it is easy to imagine that in the far more royally focused society of the Inca, the emperor would have kept a staff of 1,000.

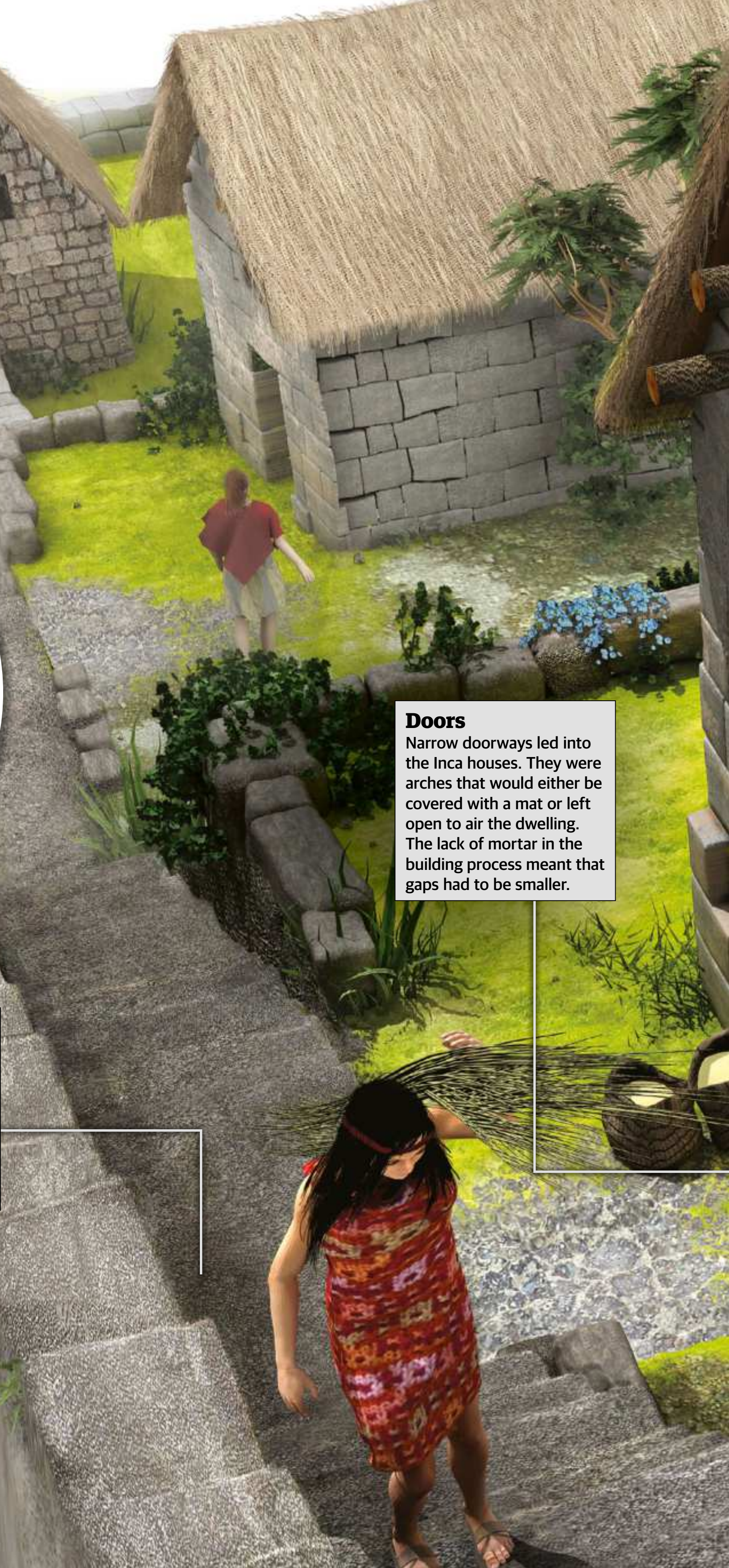
The term 'retreat', often used when describing Machu Picchu, is most likely a slightly misleading one, as it implies that the site was used purely for recreation. It is true that Pachacuti and the nobility wouldn't have been permanent residents but, far from being an Inca high-society holiday village, the site was a governmental and administrative hub. It was a focal point for Inca society and rule, and many of the yanacona would have helped it to function in this way by fulfilling administrative roles. The yanacona consisted of members of the lower classes, sometimes local, but there were also many that were imported from the edges of the Inca Empire. Research into the mineral composition of teeth in skeletons that were excavated in Machu Picchu showed that some yanacona were from as far away as the Bolivian borders, near Lake Titicaca, and the northern highlands of South America.


Pachacuti, who is thought to be responsible for the creation of Machu Picchu

Some yanacona were posted temporarily, but for many it was a permanent position that meant leaving behind family in favour of a life of servitude. In order to secure this labour (and perhaps more importantly, the loyalty) of their live-in workforce, the Inca elite needed to offer certain perks. These included gifts such as textiles and land to work for themselves, and it is generally believed that they

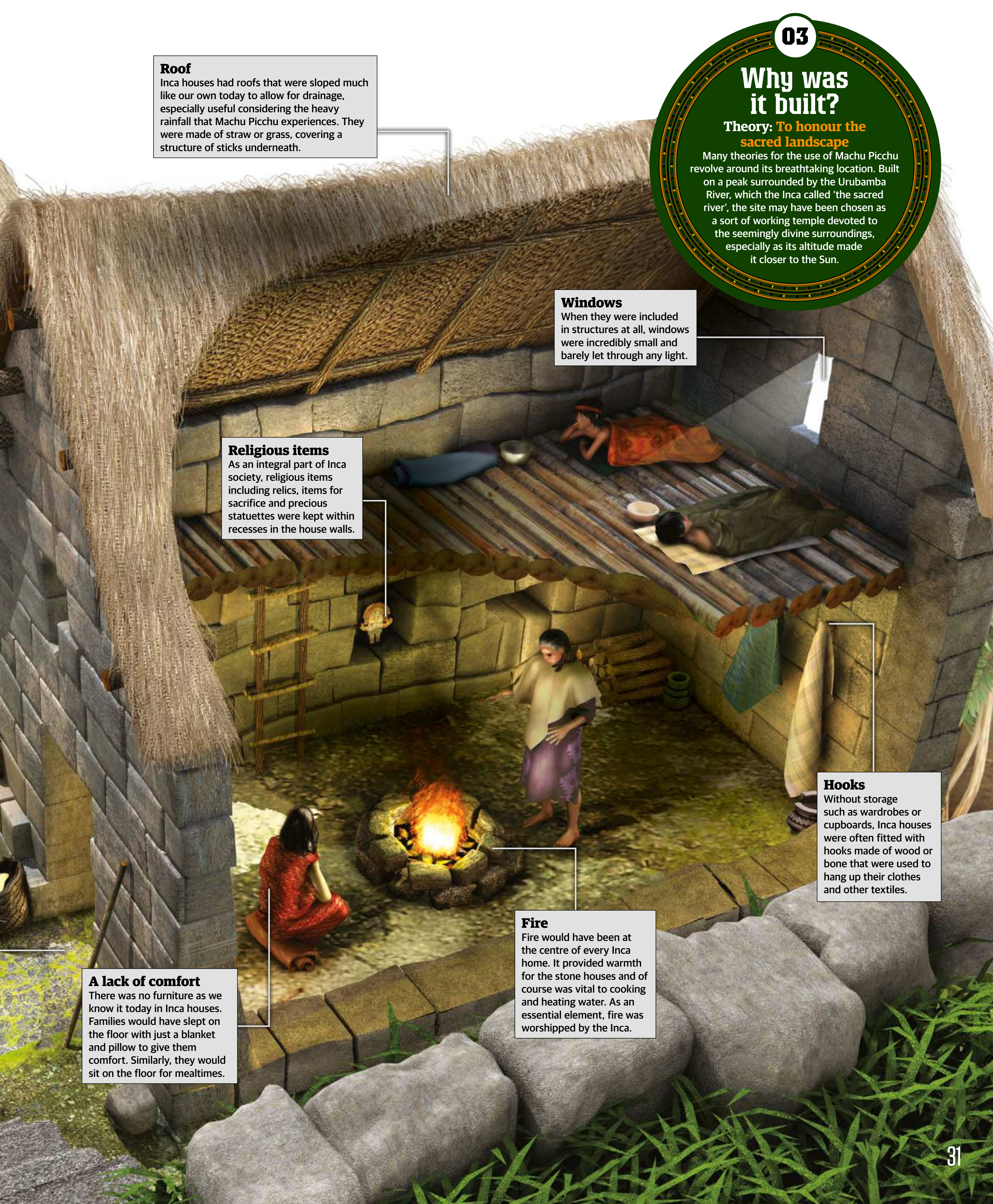
An Inca home

The yanacona of Machu Picchu lived in simple houses that often had just one room



Doors
Narrow doorways led into the Inca houses. They were arches that would either be covered with a mat or left open to air the dwelling. The lack of mortar in the building process meant that gaps had to be smaller.

Stairways
At Machu Picchu, some of the most remarkable and baffling structures are stone staircases carved from a single block of granite. Sets of steps made more traditionally from separate blocks do also exist there.



Roof
Inca houses had roofs that were sloped much like our own today to allow for drainage, especially useful considering the heavy rainfall that Machu Picchu experiences. They were made of straw or grass, covering a structure of sticks underneath.

Windows
When they were included in structures at all, windows were incredibly small and barely let through any light.

Religious items
As an integral part of Inca society, religious items including relics, items for sacrifice and precious statuettes were kept within recesses in the house walls.

Hooks
Without storage such as wardrobes or cupboards, Inca houses were often fitted with hooks made of wood or bone that were used to hang up their clothes and other textiles.

Fire
Fire would have been at the centre of every Inca home. It provided warmth for the stone houses and of course was vital to cooking and heating water. As an essential element, fire was worshipped by the Inca.

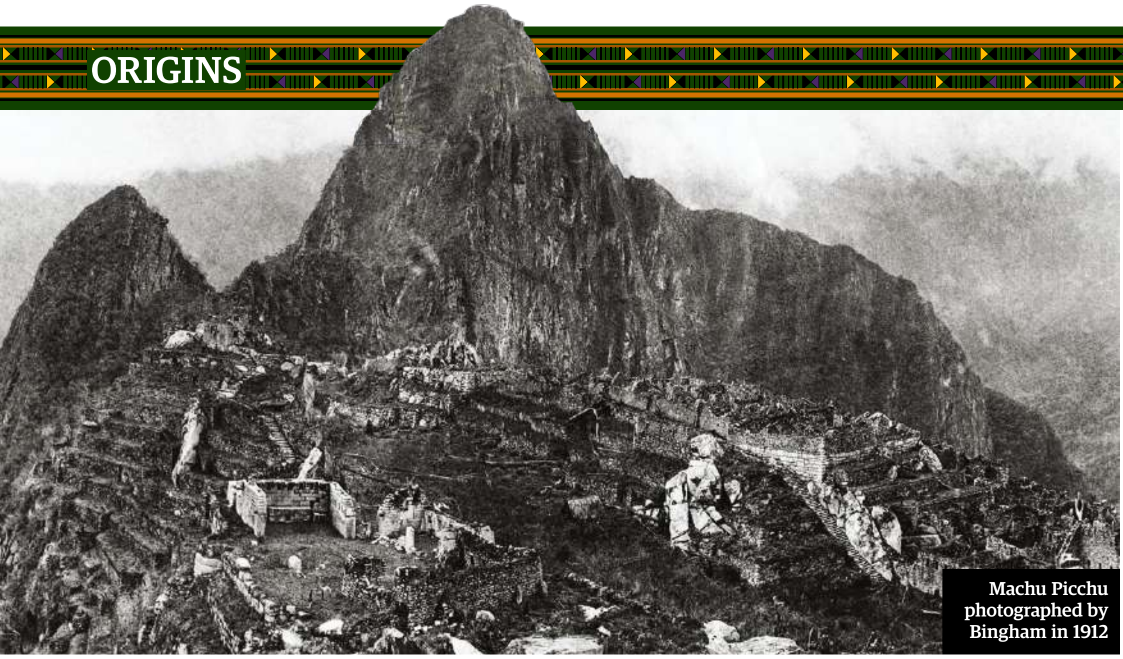
A lack of comfort
There was no furniture as we know it today in Inca houses. Families would have slept on the floor with just a blanket and pillow to give them comfort. Similarly, they would sit on the floor for mealtimes.

03

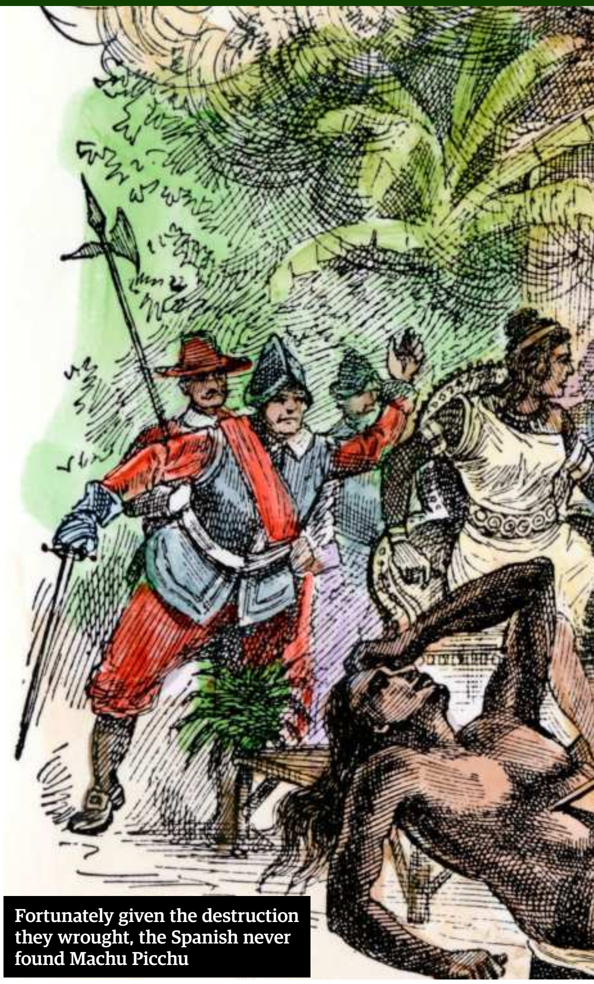
Why was it built?

Theory: **To honour the sacred landscape**

Many theories for the use of Machu Picchu revolve around its breathtaking location. Built on a peak surrounded by the Urubamba River, which the Inca called 'the sacred river', the site may have been chosen as a sort of working temple devoted to the seemingly divine surroundings, especially as its altitude made it closer to the Sun.



Machu Picchu photographed by Bingham in 1912



Fortunately given the destruction they wrought, the Spanish never found Machu Picchu

were treated with honour and respect. Skeletons from the site showed no signs of hard physical labour, and so it is entirely plausible that the sacrifice of leaving behind their family and home and to (in some cases) travel such great distances was made willingly for the promise of a comfortable and honourable life at the feet of the emperor.

Machu Picchu was built and flourished at an incredible rate during the time in which it was in use (about 100 years, a surprisingly brief period considering the intricate and time-consuming work it took to build the city). It was clearly built for longevity, on a site that was most likely spiritually significant – an abundance of Sun-worshipping temples combined with positioning that creates alignments at solstices state the case for Machu Picchu's spiritual credentials, even if that was not its primary purpose. There was no discernible reason for its abandonment, and yet today it stands just as it did when its people fled. So, just why did they abandon their spectacular citadel?

Of all of the theories that exist for why the Inca left Machu Picchu, the most prevalent is that by the time of the rule of Pachacuti's son, Túpac Inca, and grandson, Huayna Cápac, the Inca society had reached its peak and was beginning to decline. A civil war was raging as questions were raised over the succession, a struggle fought between two brothers, Huáscar and Atahualpa, sons of Huayna Cápac, over which of them should rule. Seizing this as an opportunity to build their own empire, the Spanish conquest of the 16th century was advancing across Inca society and colonising it for itself. Conquistadors such as Spanish governor Francisco Pizarro were poised to step into the opening that this in-fighting created, and they were largely successful in their endeavour.

It certainly seems that Machu Picchu was abandoned in an orderly fashion, perhaps even before the Spanish had arrived, as there are no signs of conflict on the impeccably preserved dwellings. Why the Spanish would not have destroyed more of the city if they did indeed find it, we will never know. However, there is no historical record of the Spanish happening upon Machu Picchu in their conquests, and in fact many historians believe that it was untouched by the Spanish, most likely by a stroke of luck.

Another theory that is plausible if somewhat difficult to explain is that the Inca at Machu Picchu fell foul of diseases such as smallpox, which was brought into their society by the European colonialists. With a community that had been built and bred from purely Southern American stock, their immune systems were entirely unequipped for the introduction of such vicious strains of disease. If this is what befell the population of Machu Picchu, the lack of bodies left behind is confusing, but it is possible that not all of the 1,000 inhabitants would have fallen ill, and many may have moved on as disease gripped the community. There is no doubt that European diseases were the end for the Inca people as a whole, but there is not enough evidence to prove whether it was this that led to the people of Machu Picchu abandoning the city.

Machu Picchu's mysteries are part of what makes it one of the most-visited and revered sites in the world. Today, it is recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and research continues into the skeletons, artefacts and ruins that Machu Picchu continues to offer up.

As we work to interpret the society, the lives of the people who lived there and the circumstances that led to its abandonment, we must also accept that there are plenty of questions raised by the site that will never be answered. This, surely, is the secret behind the world's fascination with Peru's city in the sky.

04

Why was it built?

Theory: **Aliens are responsible**

As with many historical mysteries, some paranormal enthusiasts believe that it was built by visiting aliens. While this theory may have no traction with most informed parties, it is an intriguing one nonetheless. Supernaturalist Erich von Däniken theorised that aliens brought civilisation to primitive man long ago and that this may have included Machu Picchu's stonework.

Expert opinion

What insight into Inca life has the site of Machu Picchu been able to provide us with?

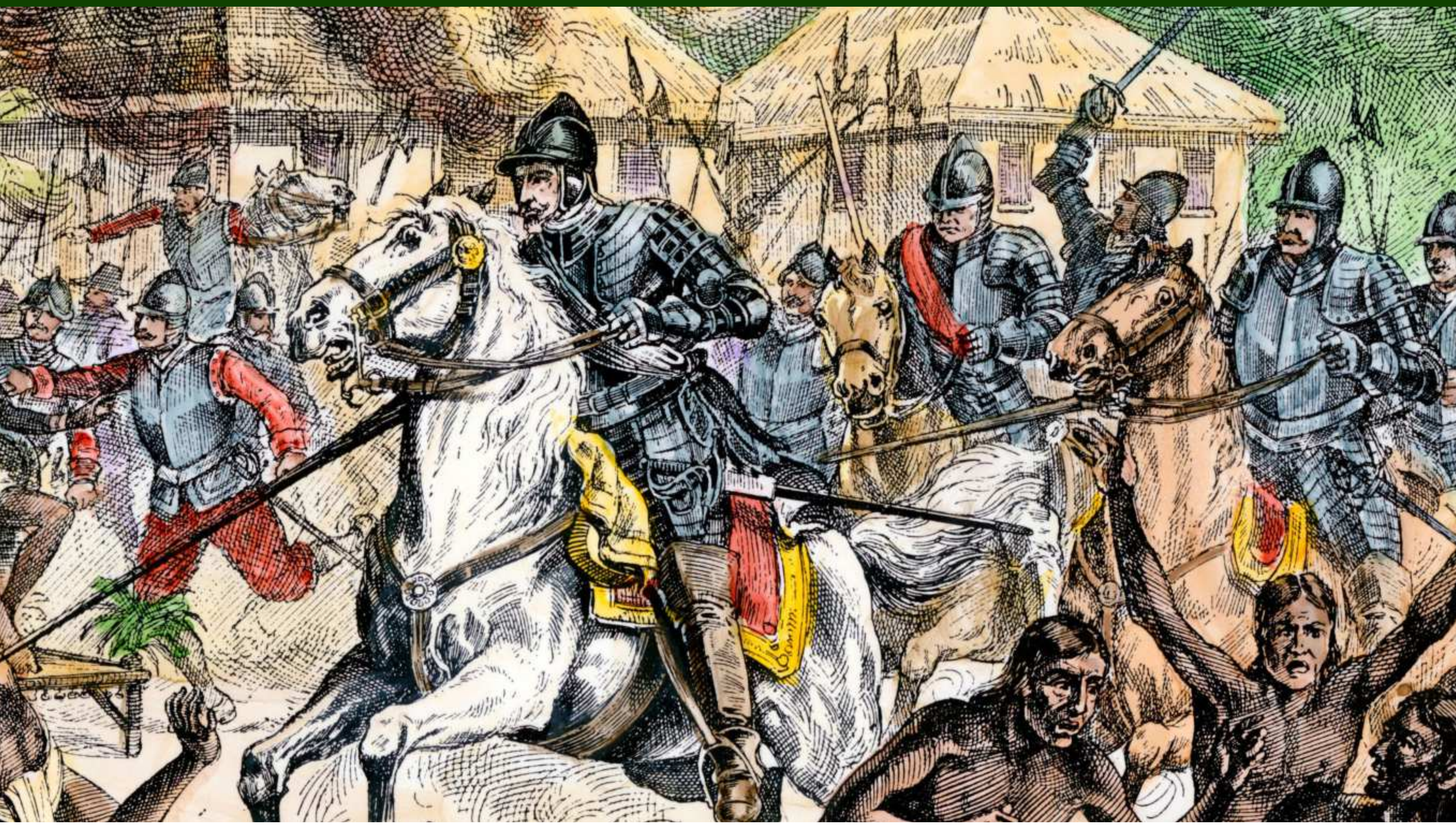
Brief bio

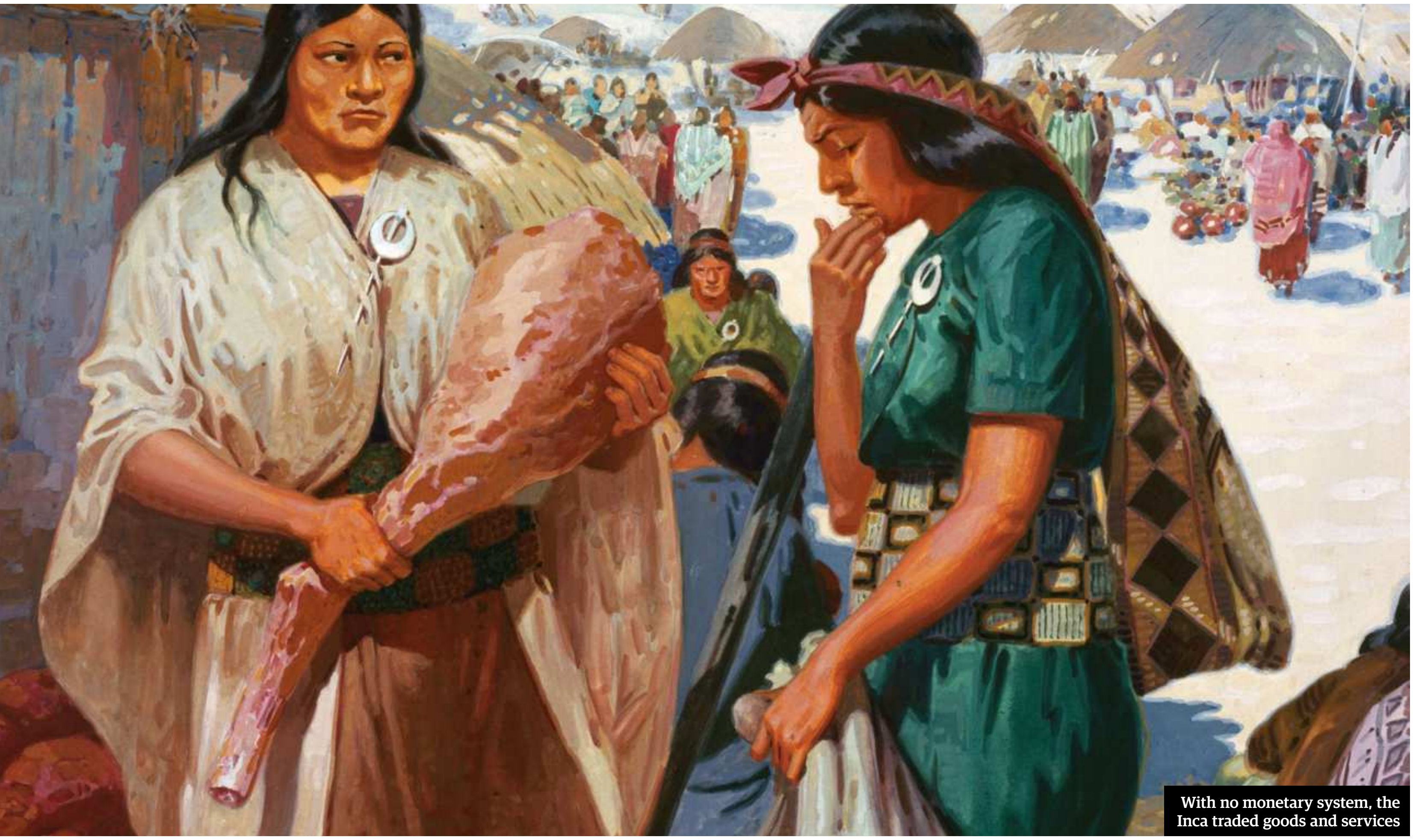
Dr John Hemming, CMG

With more than 50 years of hands-on research and exploration in South America, Dr John Hemming has written and published 11 books on South American and Inca history.

Apart from being one of the world's most beautiful and exciting ruins, Machu Picchu is hugely important in understanding Inca society. It was the creation of Pachacuti, a protean ruler who launched the Inca on a century of expansion and radically changed Inca religion, government, colonialism, architecture and planning. Machu Picchu was the first – and finest – royal estate built near to the Inca capital Cusco. However, as a royal estate, Machu Picchu was no more typical of everyday life for Inca people than, say, Balmoral is to ours today.

Built on a virgin site largely abandoned after Pachacuti's death, and never occupied by Spaniards, Machu Picchu provides archaeologists with the materials and artefacts of a complete royal settlement. Hiram Bingham removed these for study and they have just been returned to Peru a century later. They are of course of high quality although not of outstanding beauty, but they do show what the Inca elite used in their daily lives.





With no monetary system, the Inca traded goods and services

© Alamy, Getty Images, Wiki, Thinkstock

The complex figurative designs of the Chimú represent their history and folklore

Conquering the Chimú

How did an empire as large and sophisticated as the Chimú's fall to the Inca?

Written by Ben Gazur

The deserts clinging to the Pacific Coast in modern Peru are among the most hostile places on Earth. On average, rain falls just once in every 30 years, and the sands offer few places where a plant might put down roots and flourish. Yet from around 900-1470, this region was home to one of the largest empires in the Americas. The Chimú people, and their Kingdom of Chimor, thrived in this harsh environment and made the desert bloom.

The origins of the Chimú

The Moche Valley is just one of many river valleys in the region where a river carrying melt water from the distant Andes drains into the Pacific. Without this supply of water the land would be uninhabitable. Before the Chimú called this place home, the Moche people had settled there. Taking the water from the river and distributing it via canals and irrigation channels, the Moche were able to plant crops in the desert. Their society produced complex pottery and used chemical techniques to cover their metalwork with fine layers of pure gold.

Yet the Moche civilisation collapsed for unknown reasons around 200 years before the Chimú emerged. No one can be sure what caused this, but evidence of Moche influence can be traced in Chimú culture through motifs in textiles and ceramics and the Chimú expansion of their canal system.

Tales from Chimú folklore seem to acknowledge that their society developed on top of one that already existed. In one story, a noble called Taycanamo from an unnamed foreign land arrived in the Moche Valley having crossed the sea on a balsa log raft. Taycanamo claimed he had been sent by a powerful lord to rule the area, but he arrived with nothing but a cotton loincloth to cover his modesty and some yellow powders. For a year, Taycanamo remained secluded in a building performing ceremonies with his yellow powders and learning the local language. When the year was over he emerged from his isolation, took local wives and was proclaimed king. His dynasty remained in control of the Kingdom of Chimor for centuries.

While this tale must be taken as myth, it paints the image of an outsider entering a new area and taking complete control over the local population. This would prove to be a tactic used by the Chimú throughout their history. The fact that one person could - and should - dominate the whole civilisation was also represented in aspects of Chimú mythology.

In one version of their creation story, there were three eggs that produced the first humans. From the copper egg came all of the common people; from the silver egg emerged all of the women of the elite class; and from the gold hatched all of the kings and noble males, giving them divine right to rule. And this stratification of their society was just as marked in reality as it was in legend.

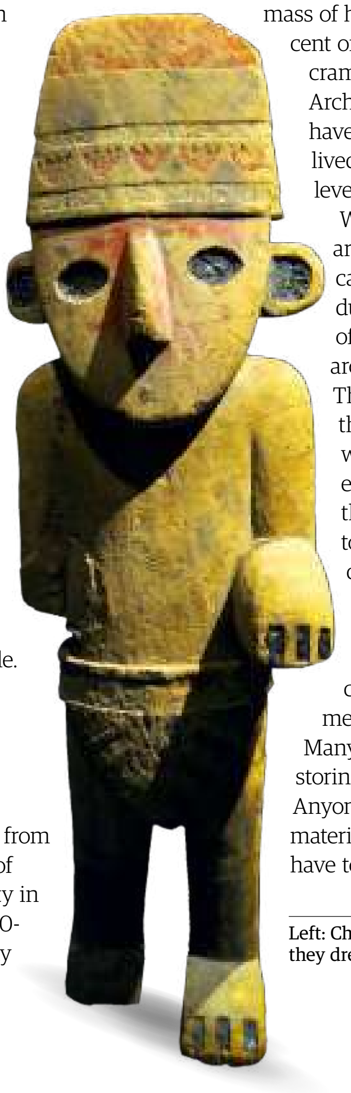
The Chimú Empire

The Kingdom of Chimor grew from its base around the great city of Chan Chan. At its peak this city in the desert was home to 30,000-40,000 people. Unlike in many cities, there was no single centre. The ruins of Chan Chan today are dominated by ten huge palaces known as ciudadelas. Between these compounds were built the houses of the elite and the crowded homes of the artisans.

With no roads as we would understand them, Chan Chan was a strange city to navigate. Nestling between walls ten metres high the mass of houses occupied by 90 per cent of the population was certainly cramped, but this was no slum. Archaeological digs at Chan Chan have revealed the craftspeople who lived there enjoyed relatively high levels of material wealth.

We might wonder why so many artisans were crammed into the capital city. Their presence was due to the fact that the Kingdom of Chimor was entirely based around the person of the ruler. The canals and irrigation channels that supported life in the desert were maintained by the ruling elite. Those who grew crops owed their livelihood and survival to those in the capital. Tribute consequently flowed into the city of Chan Chan.

The palaces of the rulers were not just homes; the largest covered over 200,000 square metres and contained 907 rooms. Many of these rooms were used for storing the tribute that kings received. Anyone wishing to work with the raw materials controlled by the king would have to visit the palace in order to get



Left: Chimú wooden figurines reveal how they dressed, worshipped and fought

> **“The ruler of the Chimú was expected to live in luxury. Surrounded by gold and silver, they stood out”**

them. Without a currency, the exact nature of trade and tribute remains somewhat obscure.

The palaces of Chan Chan also give clues about how the Kingdom of Chimor expanded. It seems that when a king died they did not entirely pass out of this world. A set of wooden figurines has survived that shows the funeral procession of a royal person. All of them move towards a palace compound, and inside the Chan Chan palaces burial platforms have been excavated. When rulers died they transformed into protective spirits, and all their worldly goods still belonged to them. When a king's son took over he inherited a title, but he would have to build his own palace and furnish it with his own treasure, and for that he was required to look outwards.

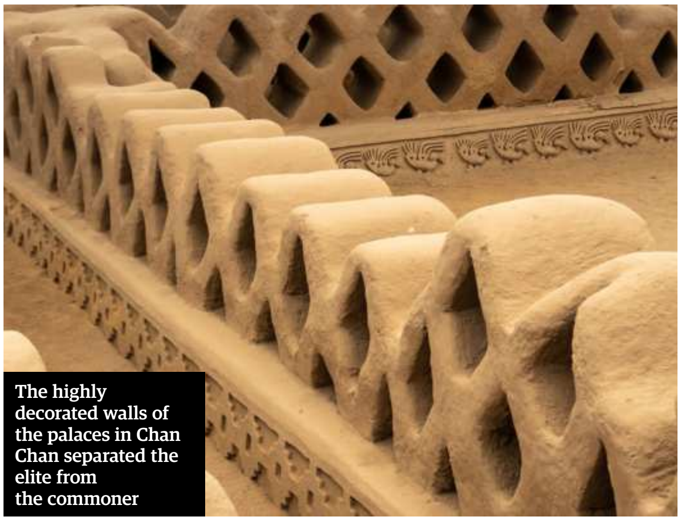
Rise and fall

The ruler of the Chimú was expected to live in luxury. Surrounded by and often dressed in gold and silver, they would have stood out from the masses. All of the tribute that came to Chan Chan was theirs. This could be crops, exotic feathers from the jungle, or the pink shells of the Spondylus mollusc that were imported from the north. Some of these shells have been found clasped in the hands of the dead in their tombs. Fragments were used in jewellery and decoration. The king even had a servant (referred to in various sources as a Fonga Sigde) who carried a basket of red dust made from these valuable shells so that the king would walk on them and not on the squalid earth.

Shells did not come cheap, however. To prove their right to rule and provide for their needs, kings were expected to expand the borders of the empire. From fragmentary historical sources and archaeology we know that the Chimú conquered north and south, taking over the peoples who lived in neighbouring river valleys.

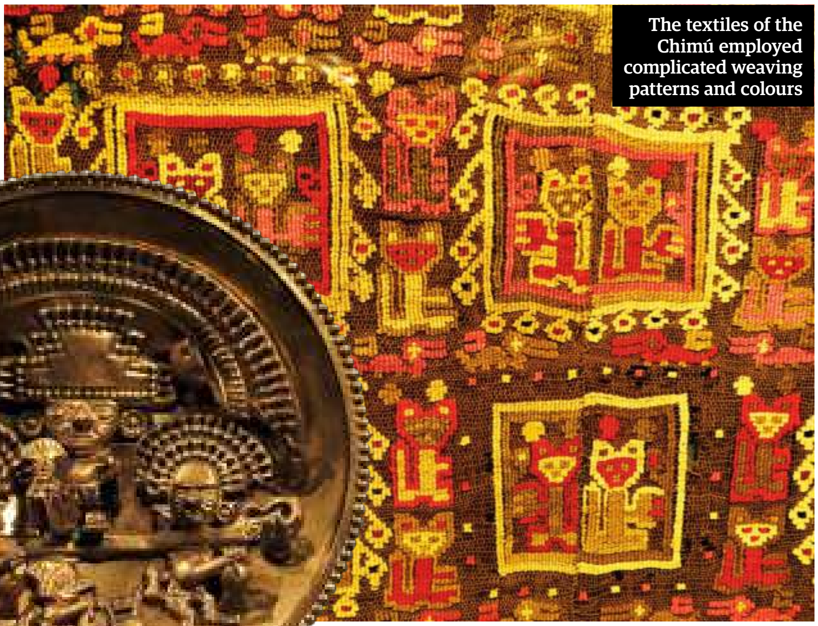
This occupation may have been violent, but it is likely that domination by the Chimú was lightly exercised. A small number of the Chimú elite seem to have moved in after conquests. Sometimes, as at Farfán, they built their homes on top of the pyramids the

The Chimú people were skilled metalworkers with a love for gold



The highly decorated walls of the palaces in Chan Chan separated the elite from the commoner

The vivid red shells of Spondylus were highly prized by the Chimú and imported from beyond their borders



The textiles of the Chimú employed complicated weaving patterns and colours

Right: This golden ear-spool shows a Chimú king carried on a ceremonial throne

Chimú metalworkers created elaborate headgear and jewellery in gold and silver

Chimú pottery styles spread throughout the Inca Empire after their conquest of Chimor

locals held sacred. Sometimes they built walled enclosures nearby. The occupation force was small but effective. As long as goods and artisans continued to travel to Chan Chan, the king would be content.

This expansion brought the Kingdom of Chimor into contact with the expanding sphere of the Inca. According to surviving accounts recorded by later Spanish historians, the final independent king of the Chimú was Minchançaman. Known as a great conqueror, he also made peace with the kingdom of Cajamarca. With the Inca under Pachacuti Inca Yupanqui taking over much of the highlands, it may be that Minchançaman was driven to expand in the hopes of matching this new territorial rival.

When an Inca army blundered into the territory of Cajamarca against the orders of Pachacuti in around 1461, they fought a battle against both the locals and the Chimú. The Inca were victorious, but the Inca king was not pleased, and the general who had led his forces was forced to commit suicide. The Inca had started a war against the Chimú they had not wanted. To maintain their control of Cajamarca, the Inca would now have to subjugate all of Peru – and that is what a force sent out by Pachacuti did.

Under the control of his son Topa, the force seems to have rolled up the Kingdom of Chimor from the north. Taking control of each river valley and the settlements they contained in turn, the Inca army cut Chan Chan off from the tribute that was vital to its survival and the prestige of its king. With Chan Chan isolated, the Inca were able to conquer north and south. With the whole region under their control they looted Chan Chan and carried its gold, art, artisans and even its king back to Cusco. Minchançaman was to live out the rest of his days as an honoured guest, but also a prisoner.

So much gold was carried back to Cusco that Pachacuti was able to plate the walls of the great Temple of Coriancha. Golden statues were also constructed with the wealth of the Chimú. Yet there was no wholesale destruction of the Chimú people and its culture. Just as the Chimú had often left local rulers in charge of their conquered domain, so did the Inca. Chan Chan and the Moche Valley was given over to the control of Minchançaman's son Chumun Caur. The son proved loyal to his new Inca overlords, and the dynasty continued to rule the area around Chan Chan even after the Spanish conquest, when they converted to Christianity.

The Kingdom of Chimor may no longer have been a great regional power, but the art that characterised it spread across the Inca domains. The uprooting of the Chimú population and movement of artisans to Cusco can be seen in the spread of Chimú ceramic and textile techniques used by the Inca. The desire of Inca nobles to dress in exotic and flamboyant fabrics means that more Chimú textiles may have been produced after the fall of Chan Chan than ever before. Chan Chan is now a dusty ruin, but the civilisation that raised it did not disappear completely.

Human sacrifices

To placate their gods, the Chimú sometimes had to take drastic action

Human sacrifice was common in many South American societies. The figurines that were modelled after a Chimú funeral procession include a naked man with his hands tied behind his back – he probably was soon to join the deceased king in death. Excavations in the palaces of Chan Chan have found a king buried alongside 300 young women, probably meant to serve him in the afterlife.

When an archaeologist was phoned and told that someone's children were playing with human skulls, he was excited rather than disturbed, as he suspected a new archaeological site had been discovered. What he found there has disturbed many, however. The bodies of nearly 200 children have since been discovered, and many of them show signs of ritual sacrifice.

Some of the most well-preserved bodies still have their hair and patches of skin, and their skulls are marked with red paint across the forehead. Cut marks on the ribs and sternum suggest that these children had their hearts removed as part of the sacrifice. To give up so many children, all in good health and well fed, was a massive sacrifice on the part of both the state and the children's parents.

One clue as to why this sacrifice took place exists as a thick layer of clay over the site. Massive rains that washed this clay out would have damaged both crops and buildings. Turning to the gods for aid, the Chimú offered up their most valuable property – children and alpacas. Preserved in the mud caused by the destructive rains are the little footprints of the sacrifices as they were led to their graves. Whether the gods were appeased has yet to be determined.

Sacrificial knives like this were used to in Chimú rituals

Law of the jungle

Explore how the Inca ruled, from their emperors to their roads and languages

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Maintaining control of a territory as large as the Inca's required shrewd administration and harsh punishments

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Meet the Inca rulers who shaped the empire

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No kingdom is ever created without bloodshed, and the Inca war machine made light work of all those who opposed it

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Quechua is an ancient language that predates the Inca, and yet its very survival is still at risk

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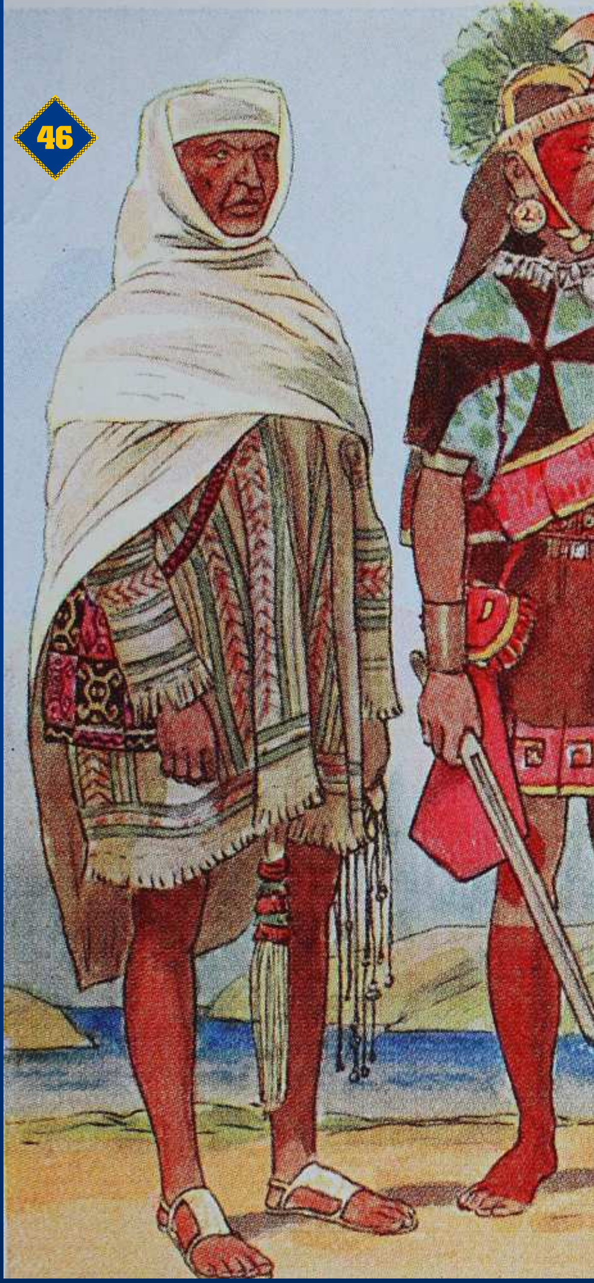
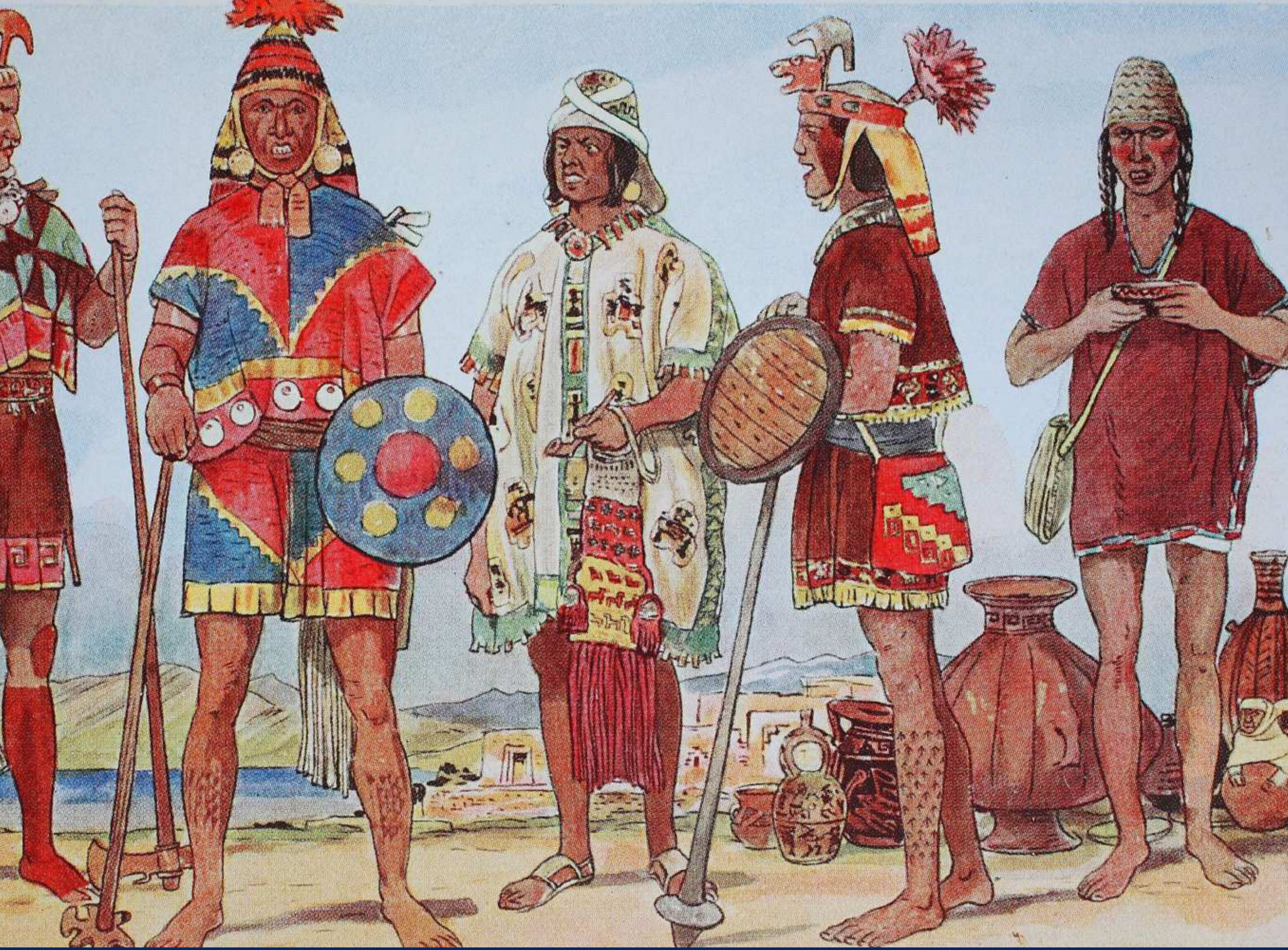
Without their elaborate road network the Inca would never have dominated South America



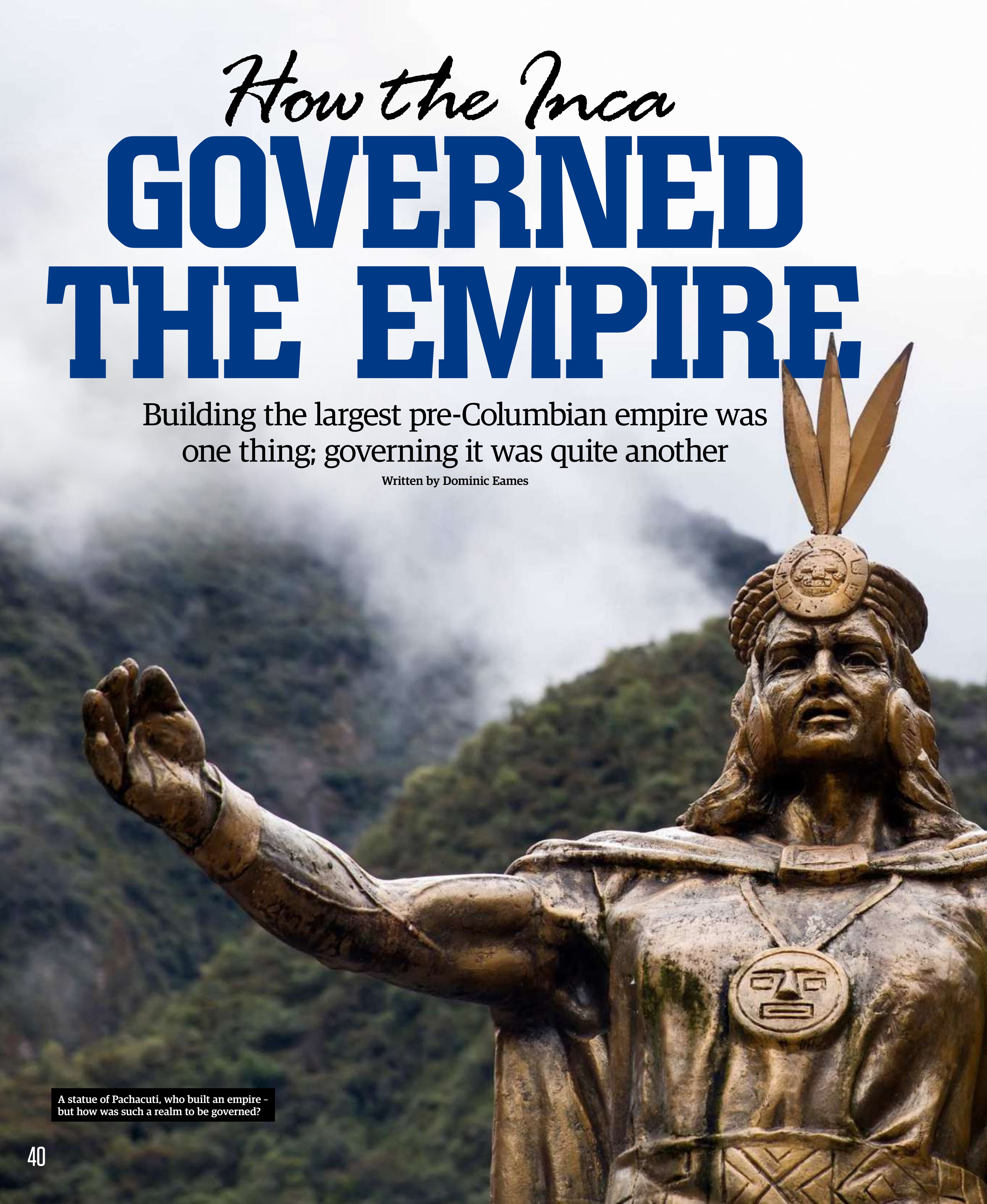


52

How the Inca GOVERNED THE EMPIRE

Building the largest pre-Columbian empire was one thing; governing it was quite another

Written by Dominic Eames



A statue of Pachacuti, who built an empire – but how was such a realm to be governed?

As their domain grew during the 15th century from a kingdom centred on the city of Cusco to an empire that stretched along much of western South America, the Inca faced an immense challenge: how to govern and administer a region larger than any other pre-Columbian civilisation. Yet despite the scale of this challenge, with an all-powerful, god-like ruler and a rigidly hierarchical political structure, they not only managed to maintain order but successfully imposed their administration, religion and culture on more than 10 million people, keeping them in line with taxes, fear of force and mass resettlement.

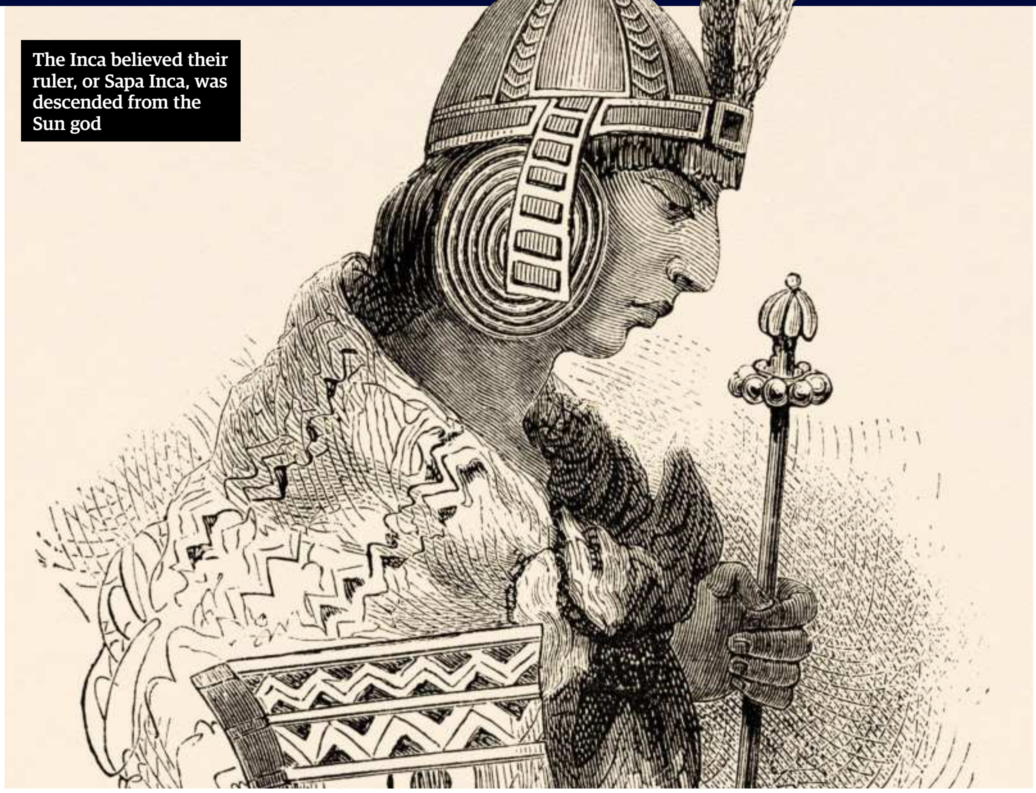
The Tahuantinsuyu, or 'Land of the Four Parts' (the name that the Inca gave their empire), was an absolute monarchy. The will of each king, or Sapa Inca, was of paramount importance on all matters of politics, society, agriculture and the military, and his command was law. His position came with ultimate privilege, as well as the responsibility of caring for his people, which in an agriculture-based economy meant controlling the distribution of his food. For this, one of his many titles was 'Huaccha Khoyaq', roughly translating as 'Lover and Benefactor of the Poor'.

The power of the Sapa Inca was not just confined to the earthly realm. The Inca believed them to be the child of the god of the Sun, Inti, so would participate in regular ceremonies and rituals dedicated to the Sun, calling for the protection and welfare of their ruler. Every province in the empire needed to devote a proportion of the land to Inti and build a Temple of the Sun.

While a Sapa Inca would expect total deference at all times, he had to keep the political elite on side - many of who would be members of his own family - and secure a stable succession without factional fighting. A Sapa Inca took many wives, with one becoming the principal queen, or qoya, and among them would often be their own sisters to ensure the purity of the bloodline. This had the added benefit of keeping power within the family and thereby reducing the chances of rogue factions appearing among the nobles.

The nobles were split into a distinct hierarchy: the members of the royal family, who would be given high positions in the government; the nobility class, made up of those of true Inca blood, able to speak the language of Quechua; and those from conquered lands who had been brought in to the administration and so granted the position of 'Incas by privilege'. A council of nobles helped the Sapa Inca govern the empire, and he may have relied on a figure known as an Inkap rantin, an adviser similar to a viceroy or prime minister.

The second most important figure in the Inca elite, however, was the high priest of the Sun, or Willaq Umu. The vital importance in worshipping the god of the Sun meant that this position would normally be filled by a close relative of the king residing in Cusco. They were responsible for the upkeep of all temples and shrines, as well as the appointment of priests, and they could be called upon as a field marshal in war.



The Inca believed their ruler, or Sapa Inca, was descended from the Sun god

This Inca elite could exert influence over policies and wield real power over the issue of succession. When a ruler died, their firstborn child did not necessarily ascend to the throne, as the new Sapa Inca would be chosen from the most capable of his family. It was decreed that he could not inherit the property and wealth of his predecessor, so he had to build a power base of his own. Instead, the other descendants received the inheritance and formed a panaqa, a royal group tasked with maintaining the estates – as well as the mummy – of the now deceased ruler.

Even after death rulers still held sway in government, as their mummies were believed to communicate with the living. They would be brought out during special ceremonies, finely dressed and with a special attendant who interpreted and voiced their wishes. Offerings of food and drink would have to be made to the preserved bodies, such was their status. The reverence shown towards them gave the panaqa power among the Inca elite, especially when it came to selecting a successor.

> **"The nobility monopolised political, religious and military positions and could establish something akin to a dynasty"**

While the next ruler may occasionally be put forward by a living one, the process regularly involved political dealing, plotting or conflict between rival factions to ensure their preferred candidate was chosen. The qoya would attempt to play a major role too as they put forward their own son's claim. Such instability and infighting invariably led to a power vacuum at the end of each reign. When the 11th Sapa Inca, Huayna Cápac, died in 1524, two of his sons launched a savage civil war over the throne.

It was the ninth Sapa Inca, Pachacuti, who began the Inca era of conquest that established the empire and who substantially rebuilt Cusco. The city, located in what is now Peru, became a thriving hub, home to tens of thousands of Inca, and the centre of religious life, with magnificent temples alongside the palace and fortresses. With a name that comes from the Quechua word for 'navel', it was the administrative, political and military capital.

From Cusco, wider systems of administration were implemented to allow for decentralised tax collection and governance. The Inca split the empire into four regions, or suyu: Chinchaysuyu to the north was the largest and most populous; Antisuyu to the east; Collasuyu to the south; and Contisuyu stretched to the west. Each had its own governor and would be further split into provinces. The governor kept control through the threat of force, either by the Inca military or through harsh punishment for rule-breaking.

The nobility monopolised political, religious and military positions and could establish something akin to a dynasty, as the roles would be hereditary. The suyu governors oversaw dozens of regional administrators, who in turn directed the activities of the local kurakas, important figures similar to magistrates in the small communities called ayllus. They would not be allowed complete autonomy, however, as independent inspectors, or Tokoyrikoq (meaning 'He who sees all'), kept a very close eye on the officials and reported back to Cusco on their conduct, keeping the king well informed.

The miles and miles of road snaking across the empire allowed for swift governance

It fell to local officials to collect taxes, but since the Inca did not have a currency, this would be paid in one of two ways. The first was a third of the agricultural produce, with another third going to the worship of the Sun god Inti, and the remaining third being allocated to the people. The second form was via labour, a system called mit'a where men paid with service to public works, such as the construction of the Inca road network, buildings, bridges, irrigation canals or mines.

Provincial administration varied, as officials had to adapt to different terrains, resources and populations, but immense efforts were made at centralisation. To assist with tax collection, the Inca carried out a regular census so that they could keep track of births, deaths, marriages and the availability of workers. All localities were also expected to maintain the vast road network; some 30,000 kilometres used the for movement of armies, administrators and goods.

The empire at its height, reaching along and inland from the Pacific coast and encompassing parts of modern-day Peru, Colombia, Bolivia, Ecuador, Argentina and Chile, saw new cultures and peoples assimilated from dozens if not hundreds of ethnic groups. The population rose to around 10 million. Controlling the conquered involved a certain tolerance – officials permitted the observation of other religions as long as Inca deities were acknowledged as superior – but the government preferred a different policy: mitmaq, or forced resettlement.

Entire populations would be moved to other parts of the empire. This broke up newly conquered ethnic groups, which made it much more difficult for them to remain self-sufficient or, worse, organise in rebellion against the Inca. They faced death if they attempted to return to their native lands. The use of mitmaq also meant that the government did not need to trouble itself with creating new administrative bodies but simply moved them when and where they needed.

Another purpose of mitmaq was to move loyal groups of settlers into new lands to keep the peace and teach the conquered cultures the ways of the Inca. This way, children from noble families received an education in the Inca language of Quechua and imperial customs, assimilating them to be loyal subjects to the Sapa Inca. Being part of the empire did have its advantages: they benefited from better food distribution, military assistance and access to goods.

So thanks to a strict hierarchical structure, topped by an absolute ruler and a nobility elite, systems of regional control, methods both to assimilate and repress conquered peoples, and an advanced transportation network, the Inca were able to build and govern the largest empire in the Americas from the mid-15th century to the 1530s.

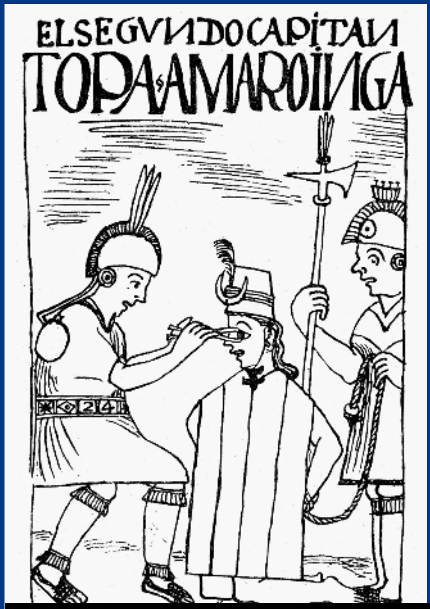
Crime and punishment

The threat of extremely harsh punishments meant there was little crime in the empire

A Spanish chronicler of Inca history, culture and society named Garcilaso de la Vega, who was born in what is now Peru in the early years of the conquest, wrote that the Inca lived by three ultimate laws: "Ama sua, ama Llulla, ama Quella," or "Do not steal, do not lie, do not be lazy." While these may have been a Spanish invention not actually practised in the empire, the Inca hardly had a strict set of rules, a justice system or even prisons. And yet, there is little evidence to suggest there was much crime.

Instead, customs and traditions governed people's behaviour, as did the word of the Sapa Inca. Law and order was maintained by the tight control the Inca held over the empire and the severity of the punishments meted out. For minor offences, the perpetrator would lose a body part, such as a hand if they were caught stealing, or they may have been blinded. They would then sit in public places begging with a bowl and telling those who walked by their story as a deterrent.

For more serious crimes, or second offences, the punishment would be death. Hanging, stoning or being pushed off a cliff awaited those who committed: murder, adultery, blasphemy against the gods, any act of rebellion against the Sapa Inca, and perhaps even laziness – as the Spanish chronicler noted, this was considered a serious crime, as a lazy person would be of little use to the empire.



Eye gouging: a common Inca punishment and an effective deterrent for would-be offenders

> "For minor offences, the perpetrator would lose a body part, such as a hand"

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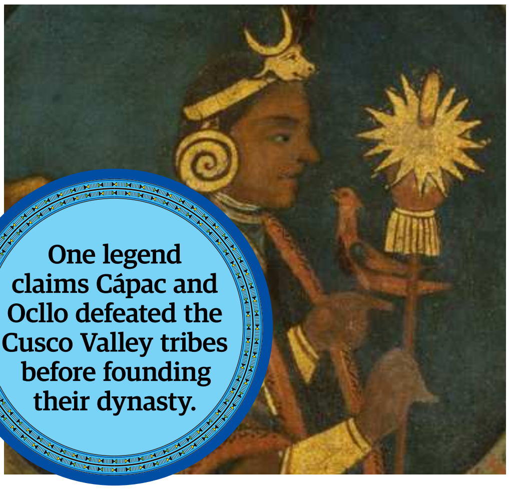
Hall of Fame Sapa Incas

Ten rulers whose reigns oversaw the rise and fall of the Inca Empire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One legend claims Cápac and Ocllo defeated the Cusco Valley tribes before founding their dynasty.

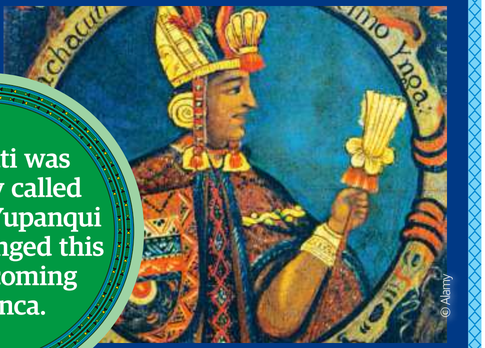
Manco Cápac INCA C. 1200–1228

Manco Cápac was the founder of the Inca dynasty and the first Sapa Inca. Considered to be the son of Inti, the Sun god, Manco Cápac's origin is shrouded in myth. According to one tale Inti took pity on the people living in Lake Titicaca and sent Manco Cápac to establish a civilisation and to teach them how to live. Equipped with a golden staff that would sink into suitable, fertile land and accompanied by his sister-wife Mama Ocllo, Manco Cápac discovered the Cusco Valley, where he founded his capital.

Pachacuti

INCA 1438–1471

Pachacuti was the Sapa Inca who transformed the kingdom of Cusco into the Inca Empire. The son of Viracocha, Pachacuti stepped forward to lead the Inca when his father fled the kingdom while it was under attack by the Chanka. Using his military skill, Pachacuti successfully defended the realm and was later named the new Sapa Inca. As emperor he pursued expansion throughout the Andes Mountains, introduced reforms and split his vast empire into four divisions, which was known as 'Tawantinsuyu' by the Inca. It is also believed that the iconic Inca ruin, Machu Picchu, was constructed during his reign.



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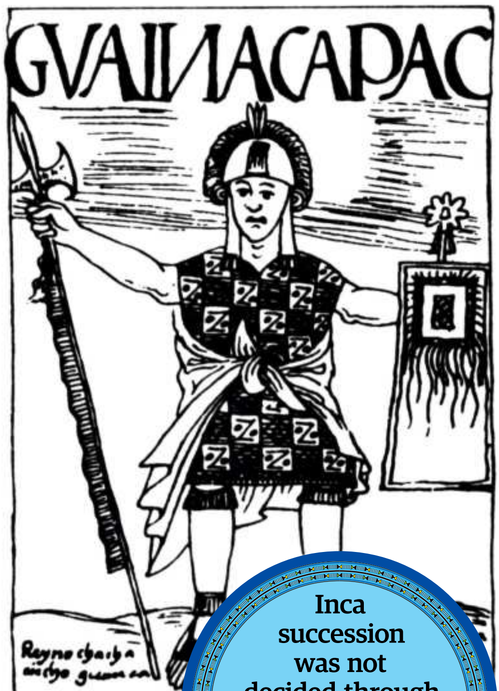
Pachacuti was originally called Cusi Inca Yupanqui but he changed this after becoming Sapa Inca.



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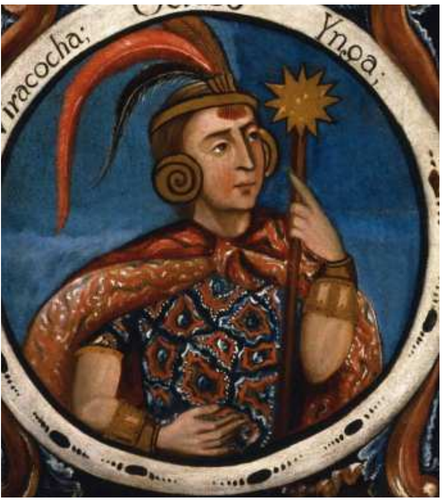
Inca succession was not decided through primogeniture but was passed on to a son of the coya.

Huayna Cápac

INCA 1493–1524

Huayna Cápac succeeded his father Topa Inca as Sapa Inca in 1493. He expanded the empire's territory into the Amazon region, conquering Ecuador and building a second capital in the city of Quito. However, overall expansion decreased during Huayna Cápac's reign in comparison to his predecessors as he spent large chunks of his rule ending rebellions. In 1524 he became ill after contracting smallpox, a disease introduced to the empire by the Spanish conquistadors. The Inca had no resistance to smallpox and it devastated the population, with both Huayna Cápac and his designated heir dying suddenly. Civil war erupted in the wake of his passing.



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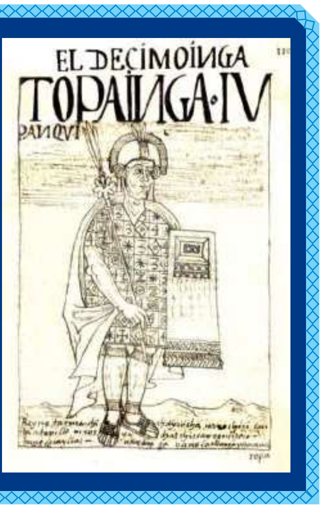
Viracocha Inca INCA C. 1410–1438

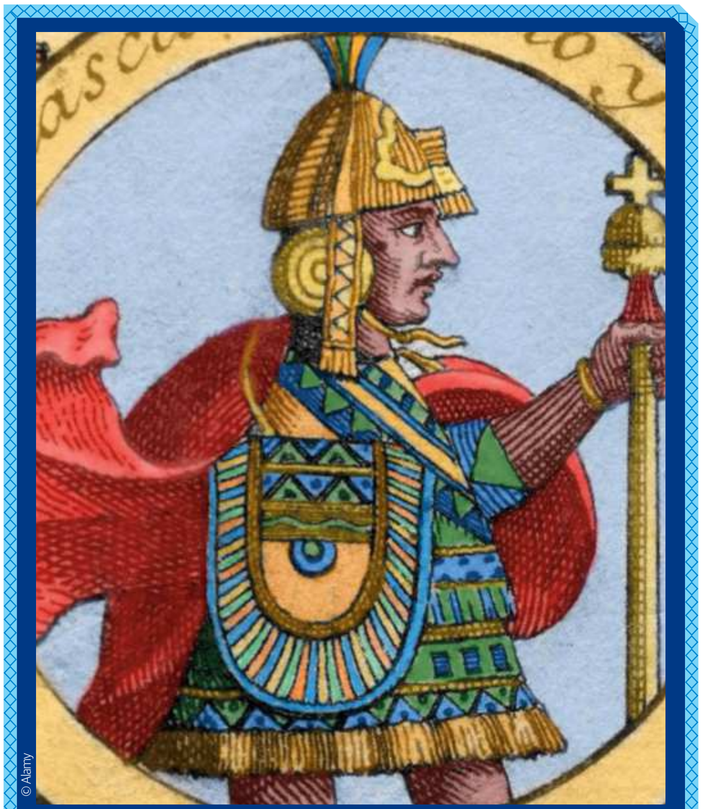
Viracocha is arguably the first Sapa Inca who can be confirmed to have been real since the tales of his predecessors are considered to be fictional by scholars. Choosing the name 'Viracocha' in honour of the Inca creator god, Viracocha began expanding Inca territory until 1438, when the kingdom of Cusco was attacked by the Chanka. Abandoning his realm, he left the Inca in the hands of his son Pachacuti.

Topa Inca Yupanqui

INCA 1471–1493

Topa was the son of Pachacuti, who appointed him as the head of the Inca army during his reign. Topa made a name for himself by defeating the Chimú (located in the north) in 1463 and thereby securing Inca dominance of the Andes. When he became emperor in 1471, Topa continued the work of his father by expanding the empire even further, to the point where it covered large parts of western South America by the time he died.





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Huáscar

INCA 1524–1532

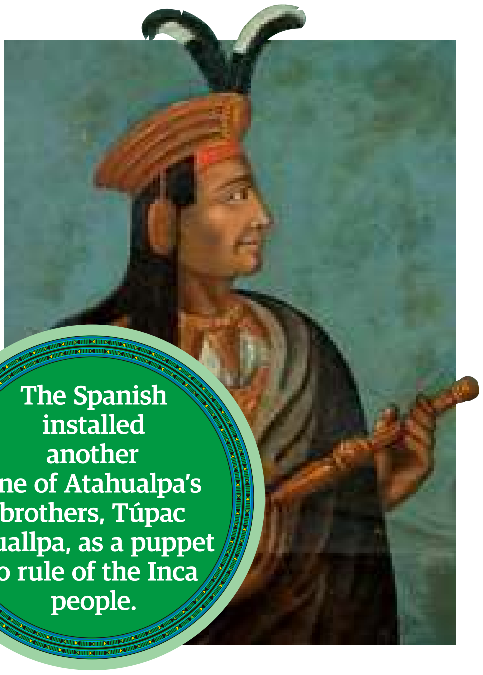
After his father, Huayna Cápac, died without naming an heir, Huáscar was named as the next Sapa Inca by the nobles of Cusco. He inherited the largest portion of the Inca Empire while his brother Atahualpa became the governor of Quito. However, Atahualpa soon led a rebellion against Huáscar and the two brothers became locked in a bloody civil war for control of the empire. Unfortunately for Huáscar his brother proved to be the superior military commander, and he was defeated and later assassinated. Following his death, Huáscar's remaining supporters allied themselves with the Spanish conquistadors against Atahualpa.

Atahualpa

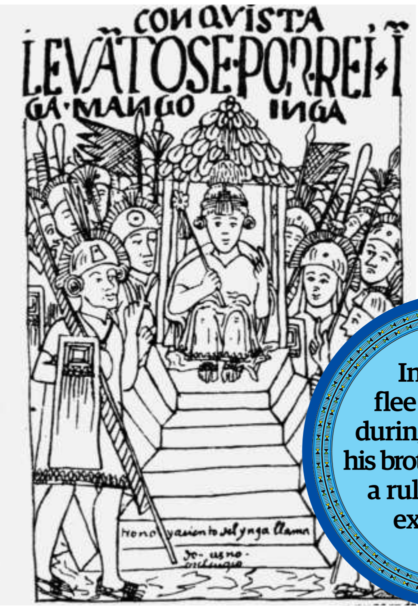
INCA 1532–1533

In the wake of his father's unexpected death, Atahualpa ignited a civil war against his brother and the new Sapa Inca, Huáscar, for control of the empire. The war lasted from 1527 to 1532, with Atahualpa emerging victorious, although the fighting had left the empire greatly weakened.

Just weeks after becoming Sapa Inca, he was captured at Cajamarca by Francisco Pizarro after his army had been overwhelmed by the Spanish guns and weapons, which were unknown to the Inca, as well as horses. Atahualpa was kept as a prisoner for a year before he was executed by garrotting.



The Spanish installed another one of Atahualpa's brothers, Túpac Huallpa, as a puppet to rule of the Inca people.



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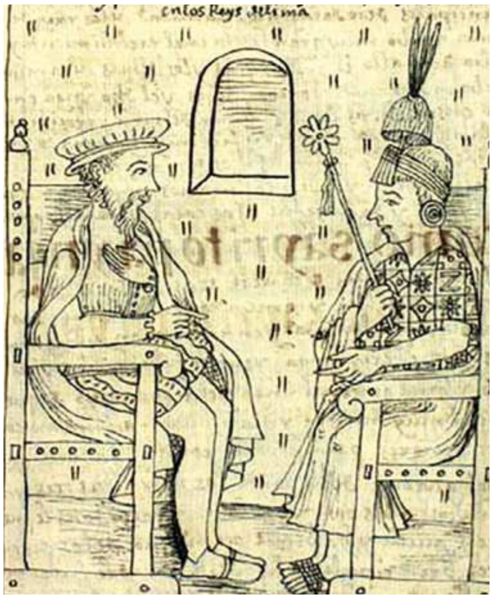
Yupanqui

INCA 1533–1545

Manco Inca, a younger brother of Huáscar and Atahualpa, was originally installed in Cusco as a puppet emperor by Francisco Pizarro. Choosing to rebel against the Spanish, he escaped their custody and formed his own army of Inca warriors, creating a base at the fortress in Ollantaytambo. After several months Manco Inca moved to Vilcabamba and founded the independent Neo-Inca State. Following his death the rule of the state was continued by Manco Inca's sons, who reigned in succession.

Manco Inca had to flee the empire during the reign of his brother Atahualpa, a ruler willing to execute any rivals.



Sayri Túpac

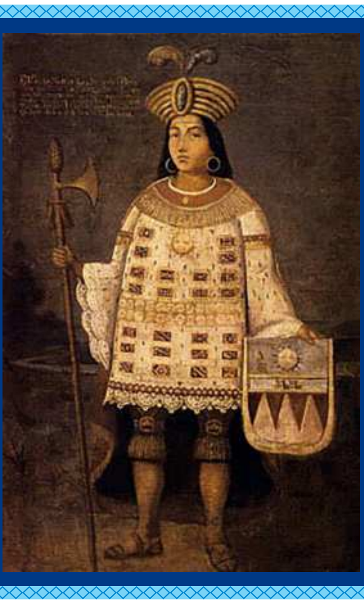
INCA 1545–1560

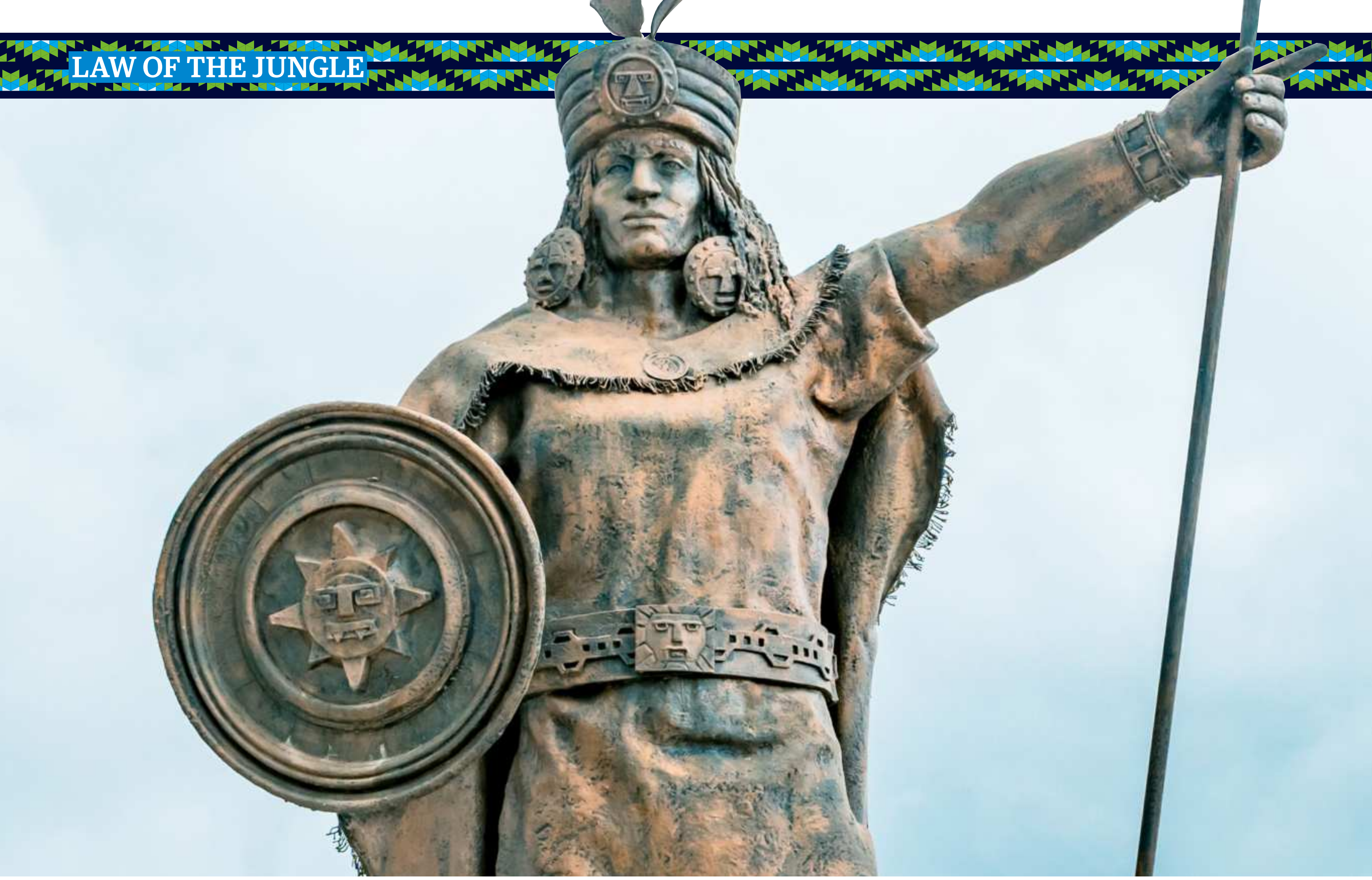
While his father Manco Inca had fought for the independence of the Inca, Sayri Túpac willingly surrendered to the Spanish when he became Sapa Inca in Vilcabamba in 1552. Agreeing to leave Vilcabamba in return for estates and a pension, he returned to Cusco with his wife to lead the natives, with the pair even converting to Christianity. He was poisoned in 1561, after which the Inca state he left behind rebelled against the Spanish.

Túpac Amaru

INCA 1571–1572

The last ever Sapa Inca, Túpac Amaru attempted to defend the remnants of the Neo-Inca State from a Spanish expedition ordered by the Viceroy of Toledo in 1572. Fleeing Vilcabamba, he was eventually captured alongside his wife and returned to Cusco, where he was put on trial for the murder of Spanish priests, an accusation that was likely invented. Túpac Amaru's defeat and execution marked the end of the Inca Empire.





The Inca army

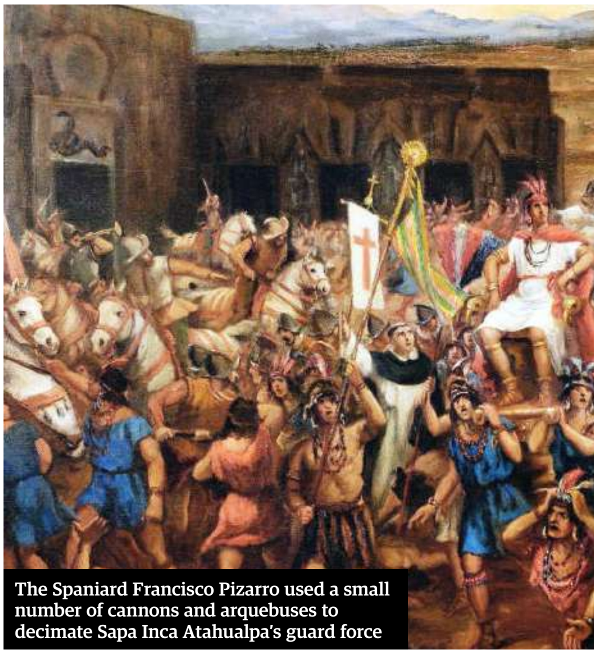
The military might that brought the Andean world to heel

Written by James Horton

The Inca Empire's meteoric rise to dominance over 10 million citizens was owed in no small part to its formidable military. From their humble beginnings dominating their neighbours in the Cusco Valley to their vast empire, the military might of the Inca was integral to their rapid assimilation of the Andean territory.

The Inca leaders were effective diplomats, offering significant incentives for neighbouring tribes to join them free of bloodshed. Many agreed to do so, observing that the benefits of empire-wide trade could afford them precious resources and minimise the risks of famine for their populations. However, these pacifistic negotiations were always enforced by the threat of the Inca military. Those who denied peaceful assimilation were met with this might and soundly crushed. Throughout their reign of dominance, the Inca leadership was devoutly expansionist, using their army to devastating effect to beat those who would not capitulate and to stamp out any embers of rebellion that stirred within their empire. The administration and organisation of the Inca Empire was admirable, but as with most ancient civilisations, such an empire could only be captured and retained with an army that outmatched those of its peers.

The Inca army was first formed when the Inca themselves were a fledgling group in the Cusco Valley. Aware that the population needed to farm for food but by doing so would leave themselves vulnerable to attack from rival settlements, the Inca formed a standing army from the outset. These stood guard over the farmers and successfully repulsed enemy incursions. Following their victories, the Inca grew in confidence and struck out on local campaigns to achieve hegemony over the valley. After overcoming a formidable enemy force set on destroying the blossoming Kingdom of Cusco, a slew of successful campaigns vastly enlarged their empire and the permanent standing army model made way in favour of an army that could be rapidly mustered on a temporary basis. The manpower of this imperial army would thereafter be predominantly drawn from the



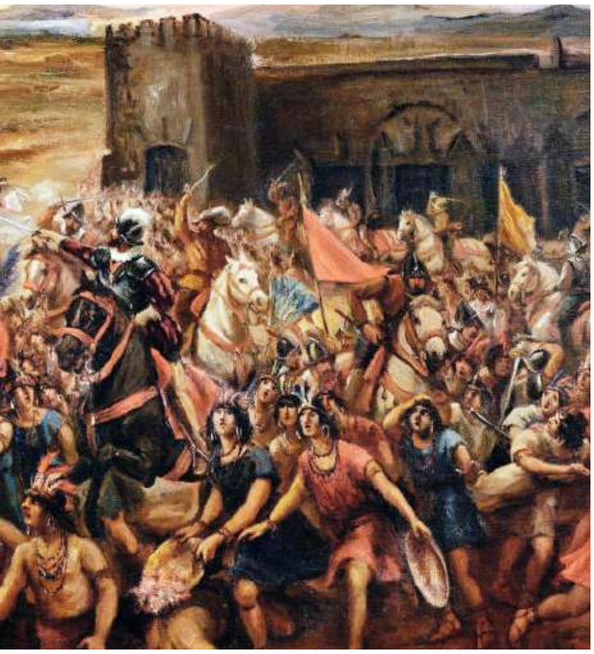
The Spaniard Francisco Pizarro used a small number of cannons and arquebuses to decimate Sapa Inca Atahualpa's guard force

> “The Inca army’s cotton armour was so effective that a soldier could escape unscathed after being struck by multiple arrows, which gave them a porcupine appearance”

subservient tribes. Such tribes in the empire paid tax to their overlords in the form of service; some citizens would undertake trade and others joined the military. Despite the vast swathes of territory eventually captured by the Inca, their forces rarely lacked manpower.

Men between the ages of 25 and 50 were summoned to fight alongside their hegemon and other tribes from across the empire. The recruited regiments, however, would fight directly alongside and under the direct command of their own tribesmen. On a micro level, this meant that the army was formed of distinctive pockets of warriors, with each group wearing battle dresses and wielding weapons that differed from those of other groups. The challenge for the leadership was to mould these regiments into a cohesive and effective fighting force.

The Inca Empire was comprised of a multi-ethnic society, and this was reflected on the battlefield. Some soldiers would be more comfortable in certain terrains and climates than others and have strong affinities for particular pieces of weaponry. As such, a broad spectrum of weapons was carried into battle. For melee weapons, a warrior wielding the iconic Inca halberd would be joined by combatants fighting with maces, clubs, axes and lances. Stones, arrows and spears also hailed down on the enemy from a repertoire of ranged weapons including bows, slings and the bolas – a throwable weapon formed of stones attached by cords that was often used for hunting.



Inca soldiers often wielded a small shield and a one-handed melee weapon

For protection, the Inca army wore tunics of cotton and wool. Thick layers of packed cotton and wool provided impressive protection against enemy arrow fire. The cotton armour was so effective that a soldier could escape unscathed after being struck by multiple arrows. The arrows would become embedded in the material instead of puncturing skin, leaving some soldiers with a ‘porcupine’ appearance at the end of battle. As a testament to its effectiveness, some Spanish soldiers adopted cotton armour during their campaigns against the Inca in place of their stifling and heavy steel plates.

For additional protection, the Inca soldiers carried small shields, often with strands of fabric hanging below the circumference for further defence against projectiles. As a final protective measure, some soldiers also wore larger wooden shields on their backs. This rear shielding reveals the pool of natural resources available and transported by the Inca, as large pieces of wood were not widely available across the empire.

One significant drawback to the Inca arsenal, however, was their reliance on bronze, stone and bone. Coveted metals such as gold and silver were abundant across the empire, but iron and the knowledge of steel had yet to be harnessed. The Inca Empire had arisen in relative isolation, so its fighting force was reflective of its restricted

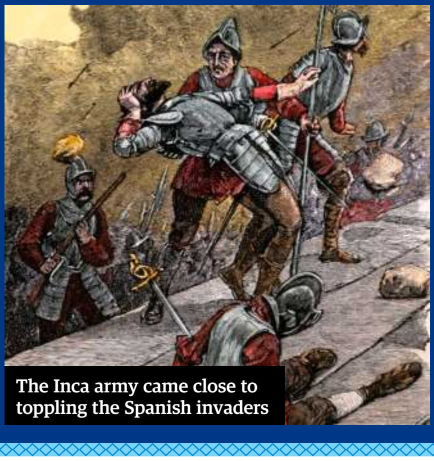
Outgunned, outmanned, outnumbered or out-planned?

Could the Inca military have achieved dominance over the Spanish invaders?

The Spanish conquistadors were the harbingers of destruction for the Inca Empire. They used a handful of roof-mounted cannons, around 100 arquebuses and a small regiment of cavalrymen to inflict thousands of casualties and capture the Sapa Inca in 1532. This horrific event revealed how truly outgunned the Inca army was against this small but deadly invader. But could the Inca have overcome these severe disadvantages when they rose up in rebellion in 1535?

The Spanish were well equipped, but at the outset of war they were severely outnumbered. So much so that the leader of the Inca, Manco, emerged from his mountaintop holdout and easily besieged the Spanish and their allies within two buildings beside the plaza of Cusco. At the same time, his talented general, Quiso, hunted Spanish reinforcements near the Spanish-founded city of Lima. Manco’s men tried and failed to storm the Spanish-occupied buildings but did learn to adjust their tactics to nullify the enemy cavalry. They dug and lined trenches with stakes to either maim or rob the enemy horse of momentum and used their hunting bolas weapon to trip the mounts. Quiso managed one better; he successfully lured Spanish cavalry into mountain passes where they were ineffective and vulnerable to aerial attack, and subsequently rained missiles and boulders down upon them. With this approach he killed approximately 100 horses. It seemed only a matter of time before the Pizarro family surrendered in Cusco and the Inca would be victorious.

However, the sound tactical adjustments that worked so well in the mountains and narrow streets of the city did not work so well on the open plain outside Lima. Despite this, a confident Manco ordered Quiso to march into arquebus fire and destroy the Spanish city. This cavalier strategy ultimately cost the general his life and robbed Manco of his most able commander, dooming his campaign. Cusco was eventually relieved and Manco retreated to the rainforest hideout of Vilcabamba. The remnants of the Inca survived and for years after they waged a guerrilla war against the Spanish, but never again would their military be the overlords of the Andes.

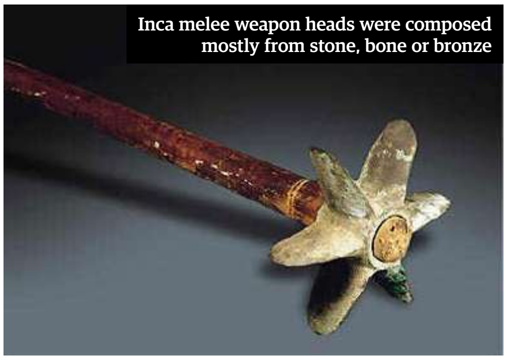


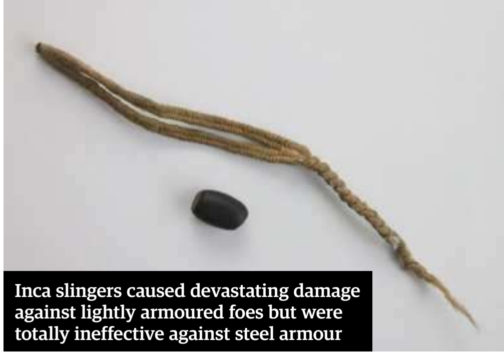
The Inca army came close to toppling the Spanish invaders knowledge and trade with those outside their natural boundaries. Cavalry warfare performed on horseback had been a devastating tool for Asian and European armies for around 2,000 years, but this animal was unknown to the Inca. Their llamas and alpacas supplied them with wool and supported an army on the move, but the entire fighting force was comprised of foot soldiers. The Inca Empire outpaced its native contemporaries in a number of ways, but their inferior equipment would be a major factor towards their downfall upon the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors.

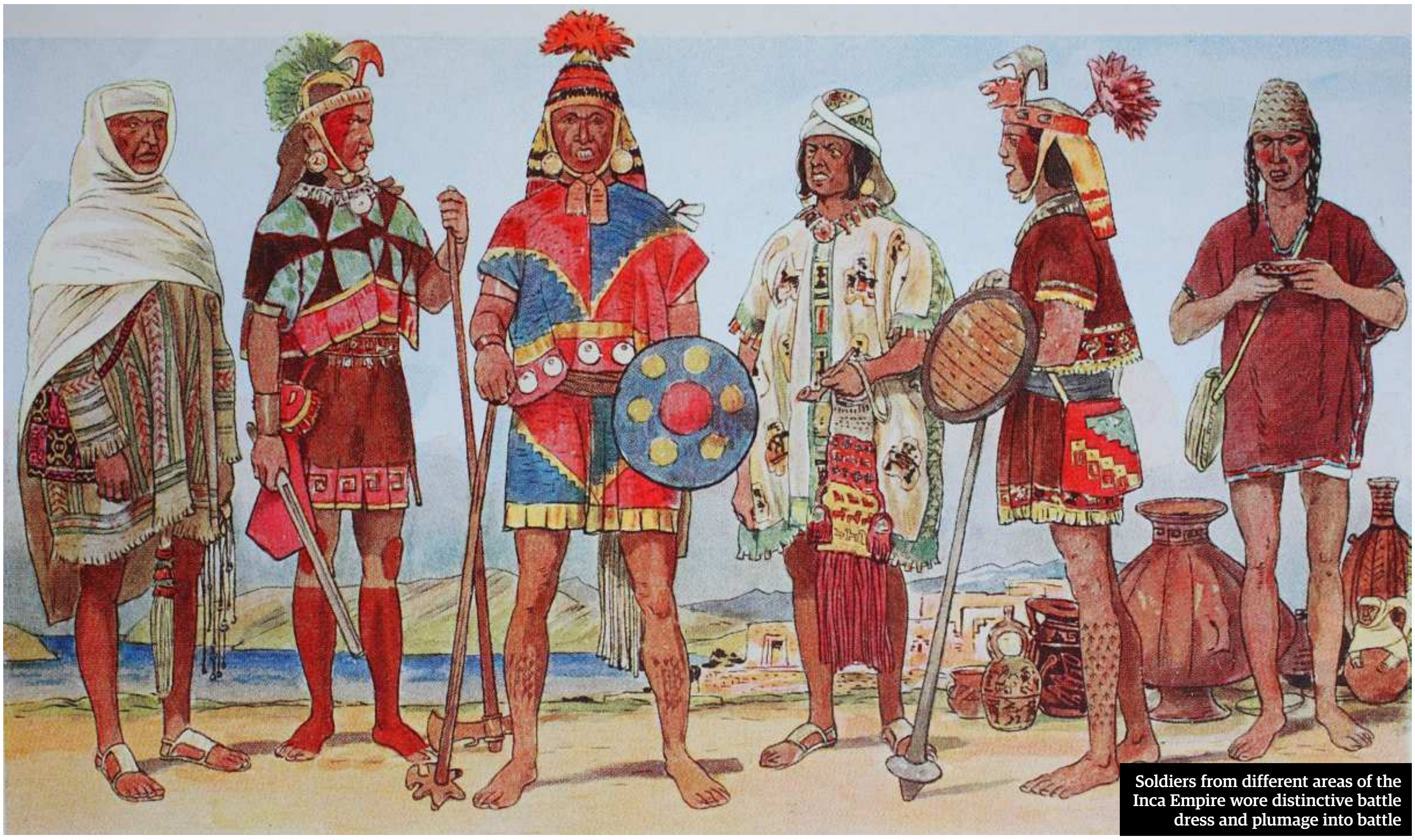
The emphasis on foot soldiers reciprocally placed a precedent of bravery on the Inca soldiers. Superior weapons and greater numbers aided the Inca in many battles, but, if the enemy was not quickly routed, victory was often decided by those who could endure the longest. As such, bravery and skill were highly coveted in the Inca army as means to raise morale on the front line. At the lower ranks of command, positions were often awarded based on a soldier's bravery and ability, which speaks to a degree of meritocracy operating within the Inca military force. Such commanders would fight at the front alongside their men, inspiring them to hold their ground. The rivals of the Inca would often employ a similar tactic, but this ploy was a double-edged sword. If the presence of a commander fighting raised morale, then the loss of such a commander could cripple it. The Inca were aware of this and often aimed to sever the heads of their enemies' commanders. In a battle against a rival faction, the Chanca, early in their ascendency, the Inca successfully countered their enemy's use of lances by peppering them from afar with projectiles. After the enemy's captains fell, they collected their lances and mounted their foes' heads on the ends, raising them high for the Chanca army to see. Their enemy's spirit was broken and the battle was won.

The higher ranks of army command were formed of either the leader or appointees of subservient tribes, who were often assigned due to their knowledge of the campaign area. The top ranks of command were always formed of the Sapa Inca themselves or another Inca noble. If the Sapa Inca did not personally attend the campaign, however, they remained the nominal head of the army. With the hierarchy established, the next ambition of the army was to fill its ranks in an orderly fashion. This was achieved using a flexible decimal system that grouped soldiers in sizes ranging from a handful of men to 10,000 troops. Some territories provided regiments consisting of ten men, others 500, others 1,000 or more. By keeping a detailed account of their military

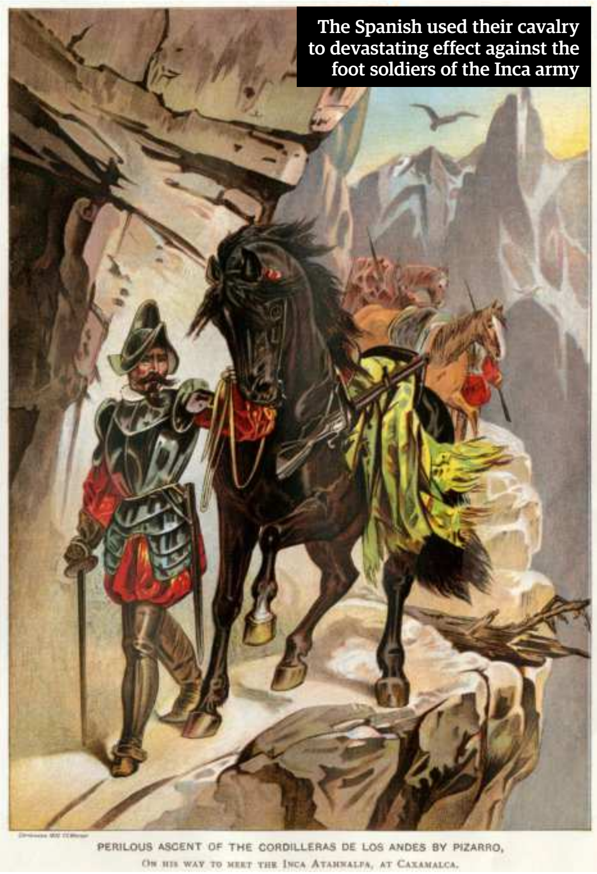
> **"After the enemy's captains fell, they collected their lances and mounted their foes' heads on the ends, raising them high"**


Inca melee weapon heads were composed mostly from stone, bone or bronze


Inca slingers caused devastating damage against lightly armoured foes but were totally ineffective against steel armour


Soldiers from different areas of the Inca Empire wore distinctive battle dress and plumage into battle

The Inca army lacked siege engine technology and so struggled to besiege heavily fortified positions


PERILOUS ASCENT OF THE CORDILLERAS DE LOS ANDES BY PIZARRO,
On his way to meet the Inca Atahualpa, at Caxamalca.

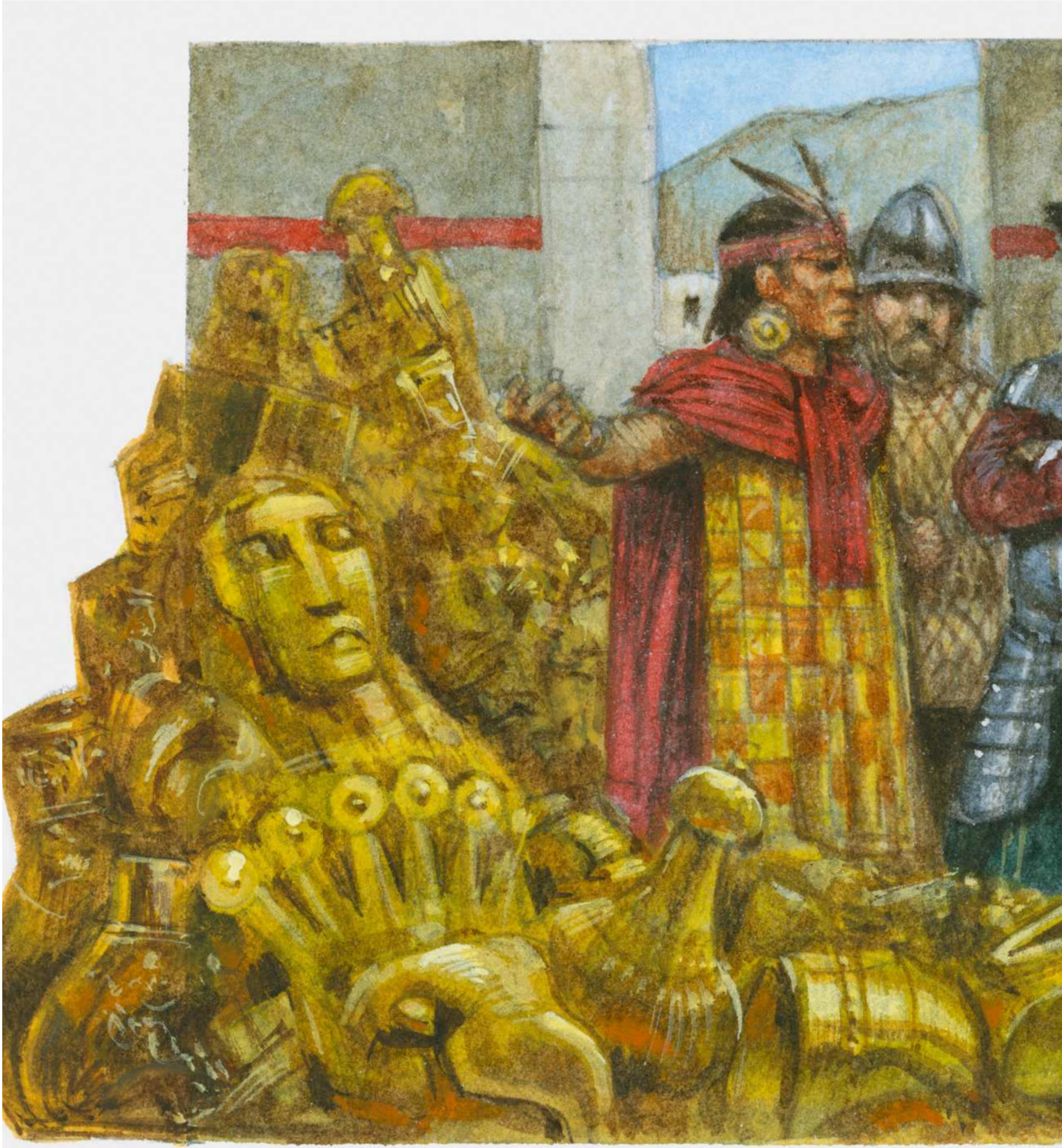
The Spanish used their cavalry to devastating effect against the foot soldiers of the Inca army

strength, the Inca could reinforce as required as the army inevitably suffered losses in battle. The Inca population possessed knowledge of remedial herbs, were able to dress wounds and could even perform certain surgeries, such as cranial trepanation. However, if these medicinal practices were not enough to return a soldier to fighting ability, they could rely on an organised arrival of reserves to replenish their ranks.

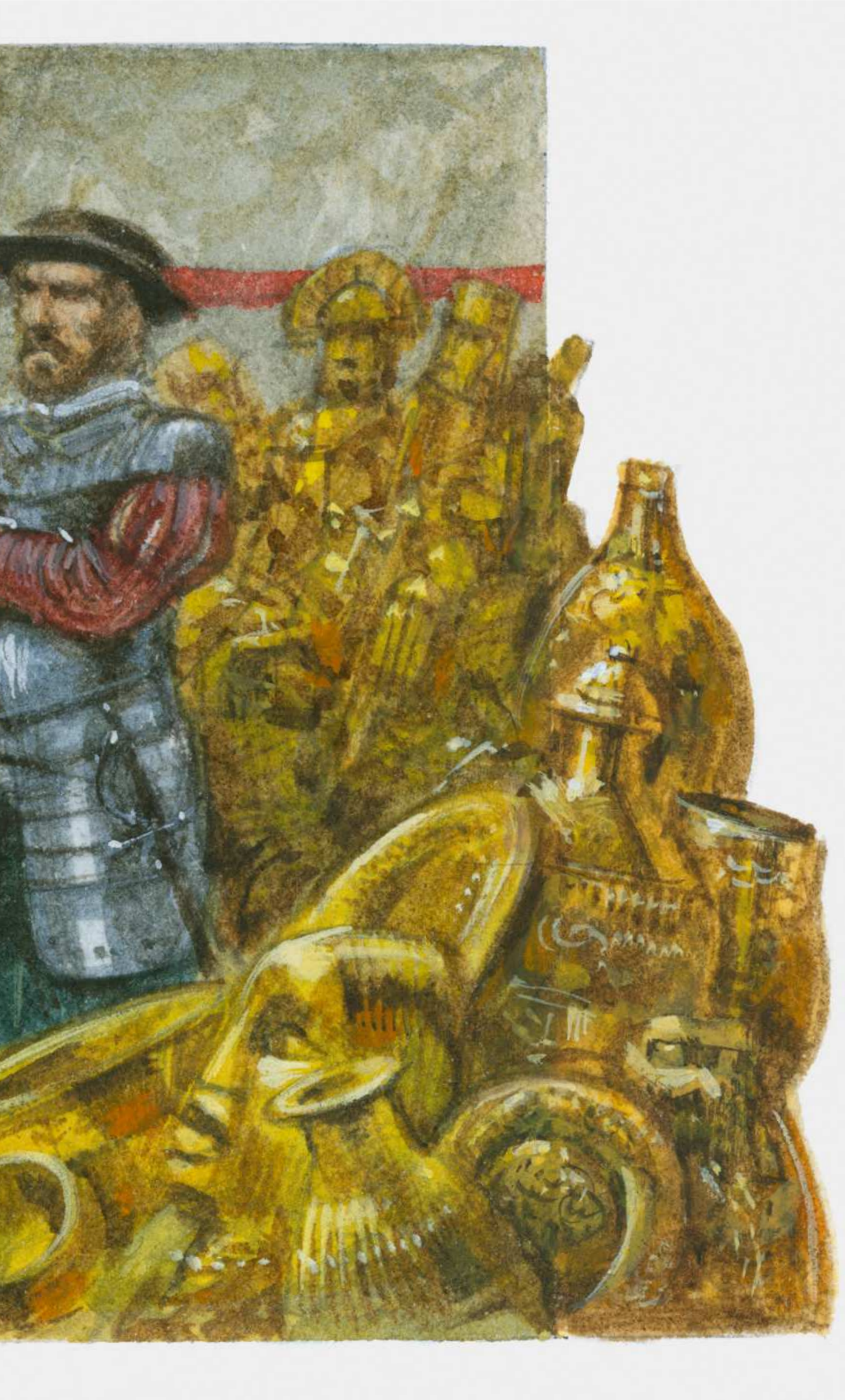
These reserves, and the main army in front of them, could travel rapidly despite the Incas having no animals capable of drawing carts nor the knowledge of wheels to build carts in the first place. They were able to move so swiftly thanks in large part to the extensive road network that spanned the empire. Along these massive stretches of road were warehouses containing food and equipment for the migrating army. This allowed military forces to travel light while on the march, facilitated the recruitment of large forces by keeping them well fed and ensured the entire army was fully equipped when battle was joined.

The Inca military machine was therefore able to efficiently and rapidly recruit, deploy and reinforce a vast army possessing diverse equipment and skill sets. However, this asset would have been considerably less effective without an expansive intelligence network that could ensure the appropriate army was assembled and deployed. Pachacuti, the first great Inca military leader, successfully implanted an abundance of spies among territories he sought to conquer. He received reports of their military strength, their material wealth and the topography of their terrain. These reports had to be relayed in ingenious ways owing to the Inca lacking a written language. Numbers were relayed using knots tied on a series of strings known as quipu, and topography could be shared with the commanders of the army using carvings made from clay. As the messengers lacked mounts, they relied on running messengers known as chasquis to deliver their information quickly. Once conquest had been achieved, the Inca leadership maintained intelligence agents across the empire in order to sniff out hints of armed rebellion. Imperial agents known as michic, for example, had permission to enter suspects' homes without consent. This intelligence-led approach was immensely successful and allowed the Inca to meet whatever external or internal threat they faced with appropriate force.

Discipline was ubiquitous in the Inca army and proved imperative to their conquests over their enemies, at least prior to the arrival of the Spanish. The Inca state operated with a communal philosophy - with free trade of essential goods across the empire despite not having a currency - and this mentality permeated into the army. Many soldiers also felt a strong sense of duty to serve as it was their sole means to contribute to the state



After his capture, the Sapa Inca Atahualpa promised to fill a room with gold to secure his freedom



> "Breaches of discipline were handled severely – a soldier's commander was permitted to kill him without consultation if he attempted to desert"

that kept their families well protected. Breaches of discipline were additionally handled severely. The army was under strict instruction to not harm any friendly territory they passed, and a soldier's immediate commander was permitted to kill him without consultation if the soldier attempted to desert. The stakes were high at the top of the command chain too, as two commanders were once put to death after a successful campaign for remaining away for too long and endangering a co-ruler while doing so.

The disciplined force provided the Inca with tactical versatility that was lacking in their native rivals. During battle, portions of the army were held back in reserve or committed to flanking manoeuvres while their compatriots doggedly pinned the enemy in place. Flanking pincer movements could be completed across the breadth of a single battlefield or across larger stretches of land, as commanders were sometimes trusted to branch off with sections of the army to envelop enemy territory from multiple directions. The Inca also utilised clever strategies to bring enemy fortifications to heel. They lacked the technology of siege weaponry, but as an alternative to besieging the walls they released prisoner refugees from their ranks and allowed them to flee back to friendly territory. This had the effect of accelerating the defenders' dwindling food supply and helped force them into submission.

The formidable capabilities of the Inca army would only come unstuck after Spanish sails appeared on the horizon. The rapid expansion that had been a mark of their phenomenal success soon turned sour for the Inca, as the arms and diseases brought over by the Europeans helped to further fracture a land still recovering from a five-year civil war. The ravages of smallpox, which decimated entire populations, coupled the vast gulf in technology between the natives and invaders, would prove too much for the empire.

If steel and horses were not intimidating enough, the use of gunpowder would obliterate any hopes of defeating the Spanish in a standard pitched battle. The Incas' army had been the scythe with which it had carved itself an empire, but it would prove to be a blunt weapon against the Spanish, and its inability to defend the empire would ultimately consign it to dust.

PHOTOS: GETTY, ALAMY

Q&A with...

Professor Sabine Hyland

Investigating how the Inca communicated through knotted cords rather than a written language

The Chankas and the Priest: A Tale of Murder and Exile in Highland Peru is available from Pennsylvania State University Press.

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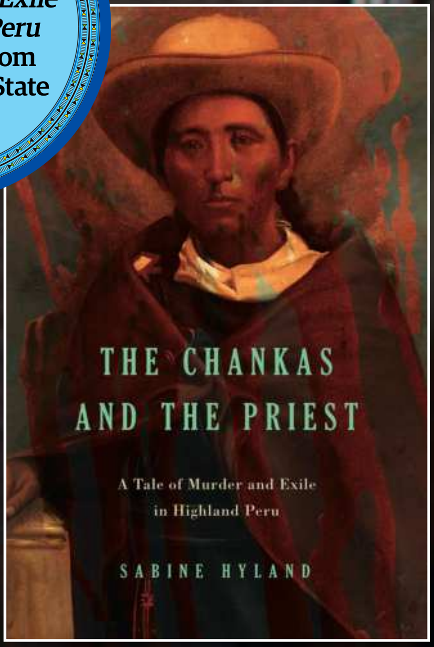


THE CHANKAS AND THE PRIEST
A Tale of Murder and Exile in Highland Peru
SABINE HYLAND

Professor Sabine Hyland is an anthropologist and ethnohistorian at the University of St Andrews. She has written extensively about the Inca and the Spanish colonial period in Peru, and she has spent over a decade investigating khipus/quipus and how to decipher them. Learn more at her website sabinehyland.com.

Q. WHAT ARE KHIPUS AND WHAT DID THE INCA USE THEM FOR?

A. Khipus, coloured and knotted cords for recording information, remain one of the greatest mysteries of the Inca and the Andean people. During the Inca Empire, khipus recorded biographies, histories, economic and census data. What if we could read the Incas' own accounts of their history instead of relying upon biased Spanish chroniclers? The Inca writing system of knotted cords remains undeciphered, although little by little we are making progress in figuring it out. My research has uncovered Peruvian villages where khipus – once thought extinct – were used until the 20th century, providing vital insights into how khipus functioned. Deciphering the 1,000-plus extant khipus would revolutionise our understanding of Andean civilisation, presenting an insiders' view of practices like human sacrifice.

Q. UNFORTUNATELY, FEWER THAN 1,000 KHIPUS ARE KNOWN TO EXIST TODAY. WHY HAVE THEY FAILED TO SURVIVE?

A. Some Spanish missionaries destroyed khipus in a vain attempt to wipe out native religion. Over the protests of those in the church who were sympathetic to Andean culture, the 'extirpators of idolatry' tried to crush indigenous beliefs. When extirpators entered a village, they searched for all the khipus, which they would burn in giant bonfires along with ancestor mummies and other sacred things. Meanwhile, the Spanish government ordered native people to keep records in Spanish, so alphabetic writing replaced khipus. Nonetheless, in a few remote communities local people continued to keep khipu accounts as a way of shielding their records from outside eyes. I believe more communities with khipus will come forward, and so the numbers will increase.

Q. WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO FOCUS YOUR WORK ON STUDYING KHIPUS?

A. Non-alphabetic writing has fascinated me ever since I was a child in the Philippines. At school in Manila we learned about the ancient baybayin script carved into bamboo and used until the 20th century for personal letters and love notes. As a teenager I lived in Peru, where I first heard about the twisted and coloured cords used by the Inca for history and poetry, as well as accounts of labour and goods. At that time it was thought that khipus were purely mnemonic and that the information in them could never be recovered. Little did I suspect that one day members of an isolated Andean community would show me a hidden manuscript describing how they treated khipus as living beings in their ceremonies, or that the elders in another remote village would reveal to me their precious khipu epistles, guarded for centuries.

Q. WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES IN DECIPHERING KHIPUS?

A. A major difficulty has been that virtually all existing khipus are in museum, university and private collections. Until now there have been only three Peruvian communities known to have maintained their patrimonial khipus, although the villagers can no longer 'read' the khipus. In the past ten years, funded by *National Geographic*, I've located three additional Andean communities where khipus were used until the 20th century.

The traditions about khipus in these villages – Anchucaya, Casta and Collata – add new revelations about khipus. My discoveries in Anchucaya, for example, enabled me to decipher the relationship between the two main colour patterns in Inca khipus and to partially interpret the meaning of a previously undeciphered khipu in the National Museum of Archaeology in Peru.

Q. YOU TRAVELLED TO THE REMOTE VILLAGE OF SAN JUAN DE COLLATA IN PERU, WHERE THE ANDEAN ELDERS PERMITTED YOU TO ANALYSE TWO KHIPUS UNDER THEIR PROTECTION. WHAT DID YOU DISCOVER?

A. Villagers in Collata guard two khipus in a chest with colonial manuscripts. Until recently the elders showed these khipus only to male community members, who were told that the khipus are narrative epistles written by local leaders about a rebellion. These are the first khipus ever identified as both narrative or epistolary. I have been able to decipher the lineage ('ayllu') names in the ending cords of each khipu, indicating the sender of each khipu. These are also the first Andean khipus known to be phonetic.

These discoveries have received international media coverage. The village council has created a packet of information, based on news reports, about their khipus for the village school. As one community official wrote to me, "It is imperative that our children know the value of their cultural heritage here in Collata so that they will not abandon their village when they grow up." On 24 June 2017, the official feast day of the village, the village council formally inducted a Spanish translation of my article on their khipus into their sacred archive.

Q. HAS YOUR RESEARCH ON THE COLLATA KHIPUS RAISED ANY NEW QUESTIONS?

A. The Collata khipus reveal a 'language of animals' in which meaning is indicated in part through the use of different animal fibres – vicuña, deer, llama, guanaco, alpaca and viscacha. In many cases the fibres can be distinguished only through touch, underscoring the three-dimensional nature of this writing system. When I studied the Collata khipus, the two herders assigned to watch me instructed me how to tell the difference between the fibres by feel – a red deer-hair cord feels very different to a red vicuña-fibre cord.

The three-dimensionality of the khipus suggests a different sort of sense scape for communication, one in which touch and feel play a role comparable to sight and sound. We believe that khipu literacy was fairly widespread during the Inca Empire, as well as in the rural communities where khipu use persisted; does the heightened focus on fine distinctions of feel and touch that are implied by feeling knot direction and ply suggest a different way of perceiving the universe as a whole, a way in which the sense of touch communicates as strongly as sight and sound?

Hyland holding the Collata khipu in June 2019

© Dr William Hyland

Creature comforts

These Inca ornaments, including a beautifully carved animal-like pendant, were displayed in Paris in 2010 during an exhibition titled 'The Inca's Gold'. Crowns, pins, necklaces, ritual cups and figurines were also shown.

Around a quarter of Peruvians speak a Quechua language

The language of the Inca

Quechua predated and outlasted the empire itself, but is its future under threat?

Written by Jackie Snowden

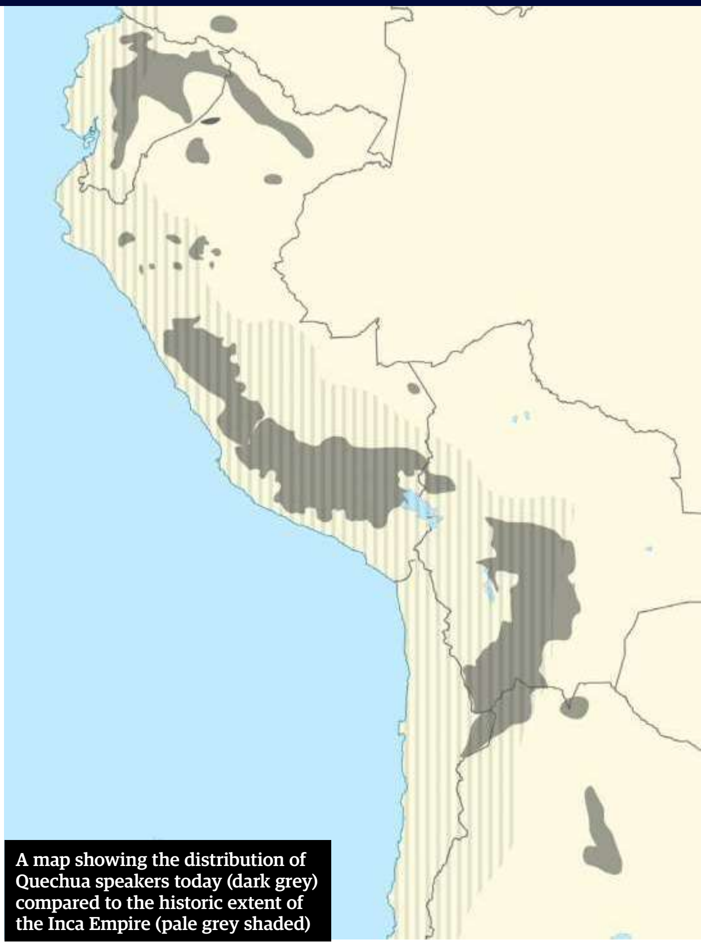
Before the rise of the formidable Inca Empire, the people of the Andes spoke a variety of different languages, which grew all the more diverse through the natural evolution of regional dialects over the centuries. As the empire flourished, the Inca lords imposed the use of one 'official' language among their subjects to aid their expansion efforts. For this purpose, they chose one of the more prominent language variants in the region: Quechua.

The term 'Quechua' actually refers to a family of related languages. The Inca adopted the coastal variety that was spoken in what is now Lima, Peru. In some cases, the people of the empire would speak a variety of Quechua in addition to their native tongue, while in others, the new official language eventually replaced local dialects completely.

While the empire's subjects were encouraged to speak Quechua, also known as Runa Simi ('language of the people'), those in high Inca society spoke Qhapaq Simi ('royal language'). It is believed that this either derived from or was closely related to Puquina, a now-extinct language of the Tiwanaku Empire (6th-10th century CE). Inca nobles believed that they were descendents of the Tiwanaku and that this elevated them above the commoners they ruled over.

For an empire that stretched the length of the Andes, governed millions of people and built

In 2019, Roxana Quispe Collantes became the first person to write and defend a thesis in Quechua



A map showing the distribution of Quechua speakers today (dark grey) compared to the historic extent of the Inca Empire (pale grey shaded)

> **“Quechua speakers often face institutionalised discrimination and find it difficult to access healthcare, social services or legal aid”**

masterful structures, it may be surprising to learn that the Inca had no writing system. It wasn’t until Spanish conquistadors reached Peru in the 16th century that efforts were made to document Quechua, when some Spaniards began interpreting the locals’ speech with the Latin alphabet.

While the Inca didn’t have a writing system of their own, they kept records in other ways. With intricate knotted strings called khipus (see page 52), the Inca could collect and share information, such as censuses and tax collections. Recent research suggests that khipus may have recorded more than just simple data – they could have documented all manner of laws, rituals and histories in their elaborate patterns of knots that we just haven’t learned to interpret yet.

The same may be true of Inca pottery and textiles. The Inca painted detailed designs on their qirus (ceremonial drinking vessels), some of which depict narrative scenes – perhaps showing historical events or key figures in Inca society. It has also been suggested that the geometric patterns of tocapus (square motifs often woven into or embroidered onto tunics) could be interpreted as glyphs, although this is still debated among researchers. Unfortunately, in both cases, we do not yet have enough evidence to fully understand the true nature of these designs.

The use of Quechua was initially tolerated by the Spanish, but towards the end of the 18th century it was suppressed after an indigenous rebellion in Peru. Even after the Latin American nations achieved independence, centuries of colonial rule meant that Spanish would also remain a ‘language of the people’ for the former Inca Empire.

Today, it’s estimated that as many as 10 million people across the central Andes speak Quechua, and it is recognised as an official language in Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia. However, Spanish remains the dominant language in these countries, particularly in the cities and – crucially – in politics. This inevitably leads to a pro-Spanish bias in policy making, and Quechua speakers can find themselves facing institutionalised discrimination as a result. For example, it can be very difficult for people who only speak Quechua to access healthcare, social services or legal aid, since doctors, social workers and lawyers often only speak Spanish.

Efforts to encourage bilingual education in schools have had mixed results. Quechua is predominantly spoken in rural areas, and – if they have the opportunity – many children are encouraged to focus on Spanish as it improves their chances of upward social mobility. Quechua-Spanish bilingual students often only speak Spanish while at university in order to fit in. According to a study at the National University of Saint Anthony the Abad in Cusco, Peru, more than 30 per cent of its students speak Quechua as their mother tongue, but only around two per cent of them continue to speak Quechua while they are at university.

Progress is being made, however. In recent years, Peru has seen the first Quechua news programme, the first court ruling written entirely in Quechua, and student Roxana Quispe Collantes made history by writing and defending her doctoral thesis in Quechua. As campaigners continue to raise awareness of the socio-economic issues faced by indigenous speakers, it is hoped that these historic milestones for the Quechua language are the first of many more.

Scholars disagree on whether or not the symbols in Inca tocapus can be interpreted like glyphs

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Roads to riches

The great network of roads that underpinned all the Inca Empire's phenomenal accomplishments

Written by James Horton

Salt was harvested by evaporating salty spring water and subsequently transported via the Inca road

LA POMA 46
CACHI 102
EMP. R.N.51 32
S.A. COBRES 45

Pyramidal structures of stones were used to declare territory governed by the Inca

The Inca road (Qhapaq Ñan in Quechua) was an expansive road network that carved and weaved for more than 30,000 kilometres across the empire. Its main highways stretched from modern-day Colombia to central Chile, and smaller paths splintered off across the far reaches of the empire, connecting even the most disparate communities. The Inca road was a monumental feat of engineering and organisation, but the Inca state reaped the rewards of their considerable efforts. The road gave citizens all over the empire access to previously unavailable commodities such as coca, tobacco, chillies, wild fruits, fish, cinnamon, salt, silver, gold, obsidian, turquoise and oxide pigments, as well as designed bone beads, seashells and other garments that were specialities of certain tribes. The connectivity of both people and materials was the birth of a local 'globalisation' of trade in the Andean region, giving the population access to foods and materials that they'd never been able to access before the road's construction.

This mini globalisation also increased the efficiency of material production, as specialised centres began to flourish, which helped to further amplify the wealth of the Inca state. For example, silver was mined and smelted in one location and transported via the road elsewhere for processing and manufacturing into artefacts. This exchange may have also involved early agriculturalists who provided food and llama caravans that enabled this transportation. To facilitate the exchange of materials, storehouses and rest houses were erected at periodic intervals. As well as harbouring stocks of food, supplies and weapons, these buildings (tambos) would host state-sponsored public feasts for the Inca labourers.

The road also served an ideological purpose both symbolically and practically. It gave state administrators the means to access even the far-flung reaches of their empire from its heart, Cusco. The Inca domain was segregated into four major political zones (suyus), but these were each connected to the nexus and to each other through the extensive road network, ensuring the empire was maintained as a homogenous whole. Administrators from Cusco and their subservient chiefs in the Inca domain also had privileged access to travel the road, whereas private citizens were denied this right. As such, the road and those walking upon it were a physical reminder to local populations of the power wielded by the Inca leadership.

The road was also used to break the binds that local tribes had to each other and instead tether each of them to the state. For example, the País Caranqui, a collection of tribes in northern Ecuador, posed serious resistance against the Inca for a decade before being conquered. After their eventual capitulation, the Inca built roads between their territories to ensure trade did not occur without the involvement of the imperial state. If marking their authority in this way wasn't overt enough, the Inca also decorated some of their roads with pyramidal stone landmarks to declare the boundaries of their provinces.

Not only were materials linked via the road but so too was the population, many of whom were recruited to serve as labourers as their form of tax. Such labourers, known as mit'a, were used to improve, extend and maintain the road system. Some of the roads maintained by the mit'a were constructed prior to the empire's reign, as significant stretches existed before the Inca

© Alamy

The total length of the connected Inca road exceeded 30,000km

New connections

How the lives of local populations were changed by the Inca road

The Inca road was constructed through imperial mandate and with an empire-serving design in mind. Citizens serving the empire through labour benefitted from the trade across the vast and diverse ecozones of the empire, enjoying new commodities and state-supplied feasts. But first and foremost, the road was constructed to serve the needs of the empire's hierarchy, so much so that the roads were not freely accessible to any citizen. Instead, they were reserved for those operating on state business such as soldiers, administrators, messenger runners (chasquis) and state-commissioned traders. However, there is mounting evidence that the mere presence of the road, and the potential for trade it offered by connecting segregated local populations, changed the local economy and working practices of many citizens.

Work by researcher Francisco Garrido in 2016 revealed that local trade was indeed enhanced between neighbouring populations without input from the state, as numerous non-native materials were found in buildings used by private miners. Garrido also noted that these workers had been drawn to work closer to the Inca road and had diversified their crafting to improve trading prospects. His research area, the Atacama Desert, detailed an isolated and quiet place in the empire. As such, the locals co-opting the Inca road for their personal uses probably found it easier to do so in these disparate and less-policed pockets. Even so, the work reveals that the local populations responded to the Inca road and utilised it to the best of their ability to improve their own livelihoods.

© Alamy

Trade of locally crafted commodities was conducted using the Inca road without the knowledge of the Inca authorities

conquest and were subsequently incorporated into the wider network of roads constructed under Inca supervision. The techniques employed by the Inca were also familiar to these precursor roads. As such, the roads had a degree of homogeneity, thanks to government technicians who oversaw the construction projects.

The design of new segments of road depended on the resources and labour available, the terrain and the expected use of the road. The considerable variation in ecozones, which included grasslands, mountain peaks, humid forests and deserts, necessitated different construction techniques, and the Inca rarely shied away from constructing on difficult terrains. Where pastureland and water were available, roads of wide berth were constructed to support llama caravans. Some roads were 140 metres wide and were divided into multiple lanes. However, if pastureland and water were not available then the traffic would be predominantly pedestrian and the road needn't be as wide. Likewise, on flat, dry and infrequently travelled stretches, the road's construction could be considerably simpler.

The 'road' on these parts could be little more than a path marked out with a simple line of stones or wood at its edges, or just a gap where stones had been moved aside to create a discernible path. Conversely, the Inca would often strive to construct a road that enabled a minimal distance to be travelled, even if this meant traversing swampland and straddling long gorges. Therefore the spectrum of engineering required to assemble the Inca road was vast, ranging from simple, well-trodden trails to sophisticated and laborious mechanical engineering that awed the invading Spanish.

On wider roads, such as the highland highroads north of Cusco, where traffic was great, the engineering requirements were considerable. Drainage systems were installed here alongside stone pavements. Waterlogged stretches of the road carried risks of erosion and so had to be both crafted and cared for, more so than other roads. Steps and walls were also incorporated into these structures. Some of the walls were retention walls erected to stabilise the embankments on either side of the road, while other walls were raised to separate the road from agricultural pastureland. The Inca used incremental retention walls to such effectiveness that they could safely construct level paths on a slope as steep as 35 degrees, quite a feat of engineering.

In areas where water was especially prevalent, water management became of paramount importance. In humid regions with considerable rainfall, for example, the roads were paved by laying large and flat stones on the border of the path and lining smaller stones along its centre. Drainage canals were also dug along the flanks of these roads to remove excess rainfall. On sloping terrain, these roads would be little more than a metre wide in places, which was a strategy employed to minimise maintenance of the paved roads. To this end, the drainage canals would sometimes be lined with stone to increase their longevity. Others were lined simply with wood, which meant that they needed to be more consistently maintained.

A degree of maintenance would be required in either case, however, as debris and vegetation would inevitably accumulate in the canals. This work was overseen by maintenance officials known as tocricoc. As considerable labour would be required to both construct and maintain these stretches of road, such meticulous effort sent a powerful message to the citizens of the Inca state.

In instances where avoiding natural obstacles would result in a considerable detour, roads were erected across swampland and shallow bays. Here, mammoth paved roads, which could be 16 metres wide and run for 20 kilometres, were laid on top of causeways formed of stone and earthwork, which raised the earth above the water level. Over floodplains or streams, however, where obstructing water using earthworks would be ineffective, the Inca crafted passable culverts. These consisted mostly of a series of stone pillars with traversable large stone slabs laid atop them, which allowed water to flow through the gaps in the pillars.

If these culverts were a simple but effective example of bridge engineering from the Inca, they also employed much more grandiose building techniques to cross the plummeting gorges of Peru. The structural material of these catenary bridges was composed almost entirely of fibrous cables made from vines, branches and grass.

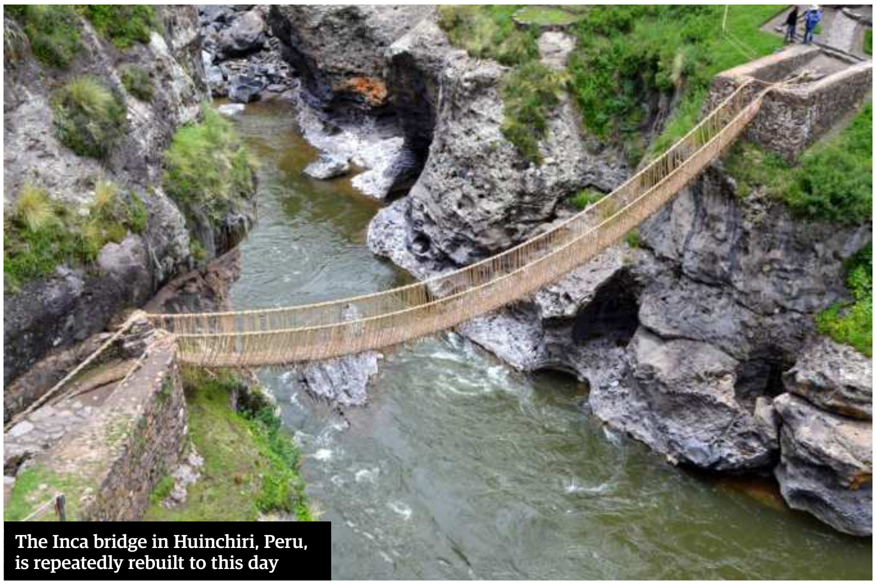
Three cables were attached to stone supports (abutments) at either end and wooden planks were laid on top of them to form a walkway.

Two more cables were used as handrails. As the design of the bridges meant that the load was held at either end of the gorge and the materials were flexible, the bridges would sag in the middle and sway as travellers commuted across them.

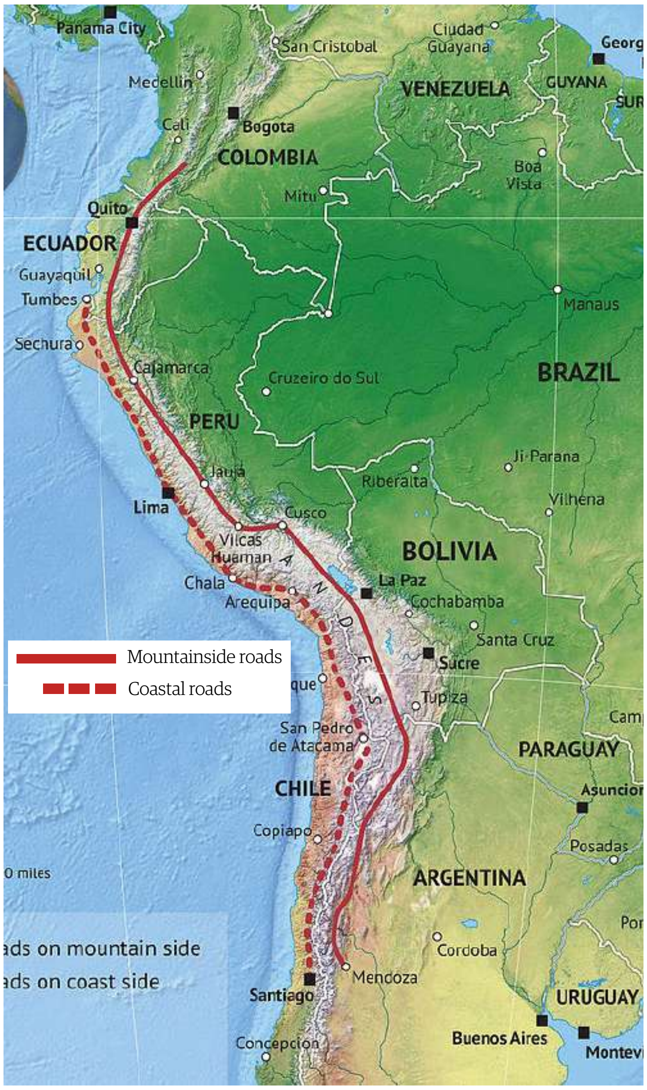
The was an intimidating prospect for the invading Spanish, who were simultaneously impressed by the engineering feat and fearful of trusting their lives to its efficacy.

Unlike the stone constructions, the fibrous bridges required near-constant maintenance and had to be repeatedly rebuilt. No original bridge remains intact today, but the locals of Huinchiri, Peru, still periodically rebuild their Inca bridge to continue their ancestors' legacy. Despite the considerable effort required to build and maintain them, the catenary bridges allowed the Inca to rapidly pass over 40 metres of open air, which saved huge amounts of time. These constructions also impressed awe upon the local tribes, some of which were known to capitulate to the Sapa Inca without bloodshed after witnessing his empire's masterful works.

The Inca were one of the most successful rapidly expanding empires in history. They overcame numerous challenges and tribulations with military force, engineering ingenuity, effective administration and savvy politics. It is hard to separate any of these noteworthy feats from the Inca road, which was critical to the success of each of the Inca designs. More than simply acting as a physical network connecting the empire, the Inca road tethered the philosophy of the Inca across its vast realm.



The Inca bridge in Huinchiri, Peru, is repeatedly rebuilt to this day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Concepcion
Montev

Some stretches of the Inca road were flanked by sturdy walls up to 2m high

Faith and farming

Worshipping the gods and cultivating the land dictated all aspects of Inca life

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The birth of the Inca people is one shrouded in mystery, legends and formidable gods

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Get to grips with an Inca artefact from the 1500s

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When it came to tying the knot, the Inca were nothing if not practical, as their trial marriages prove

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From pottery and metalwork to textile weaving and ceramics, the Inca were a creative and colourful people

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Roads, temples, bridges and canals - the Inca mastered them all in their quest to expand their influence

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Whether they were wielding a foot plough or a weapon of war, the Inca could rely on cutting-edge tools and pioneering transport routes

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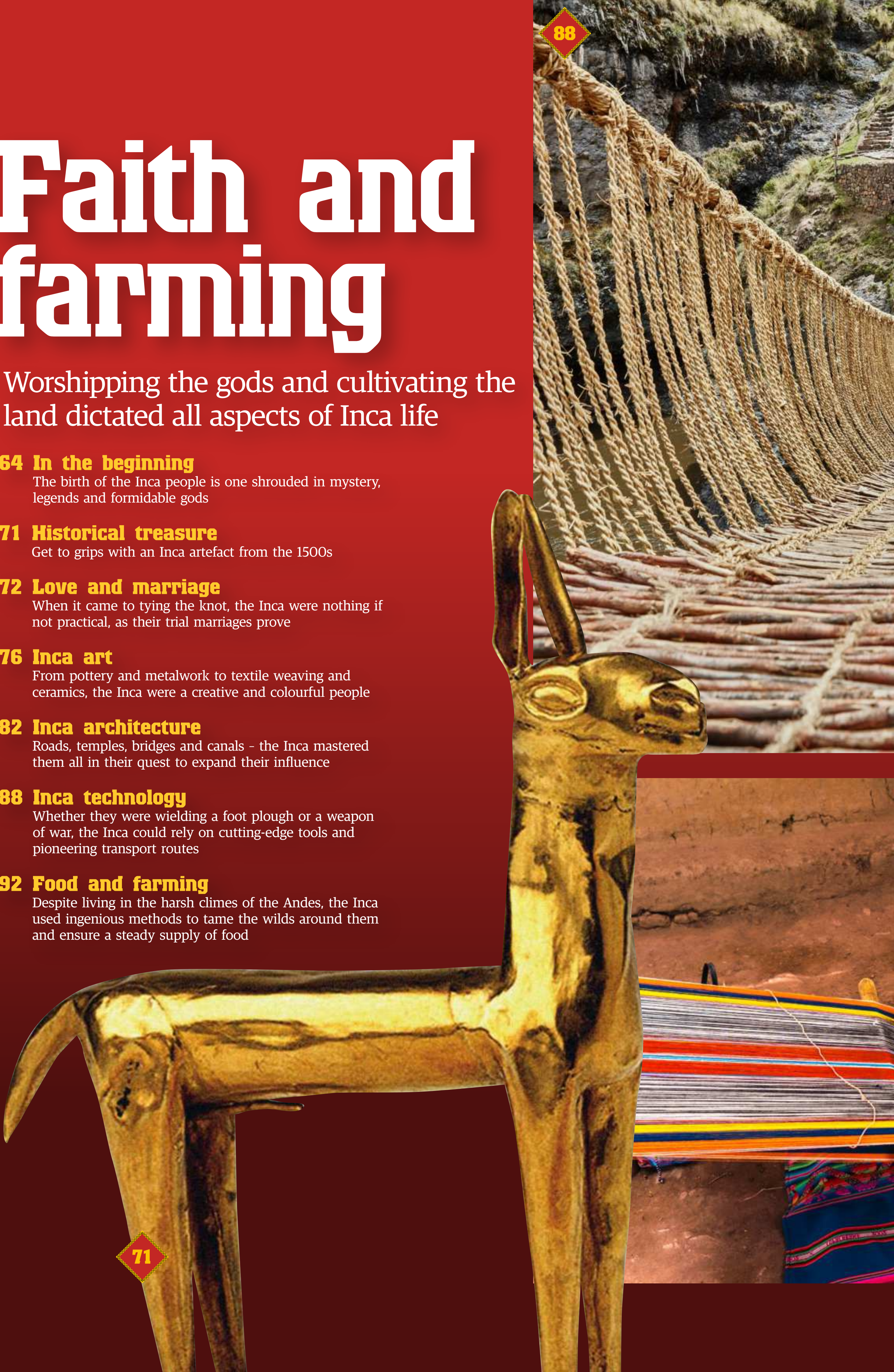
Despite living in the harsh climes of the Andes, the Inca used ingenious methods to tame the wilds around them and ensure a steady supply of food



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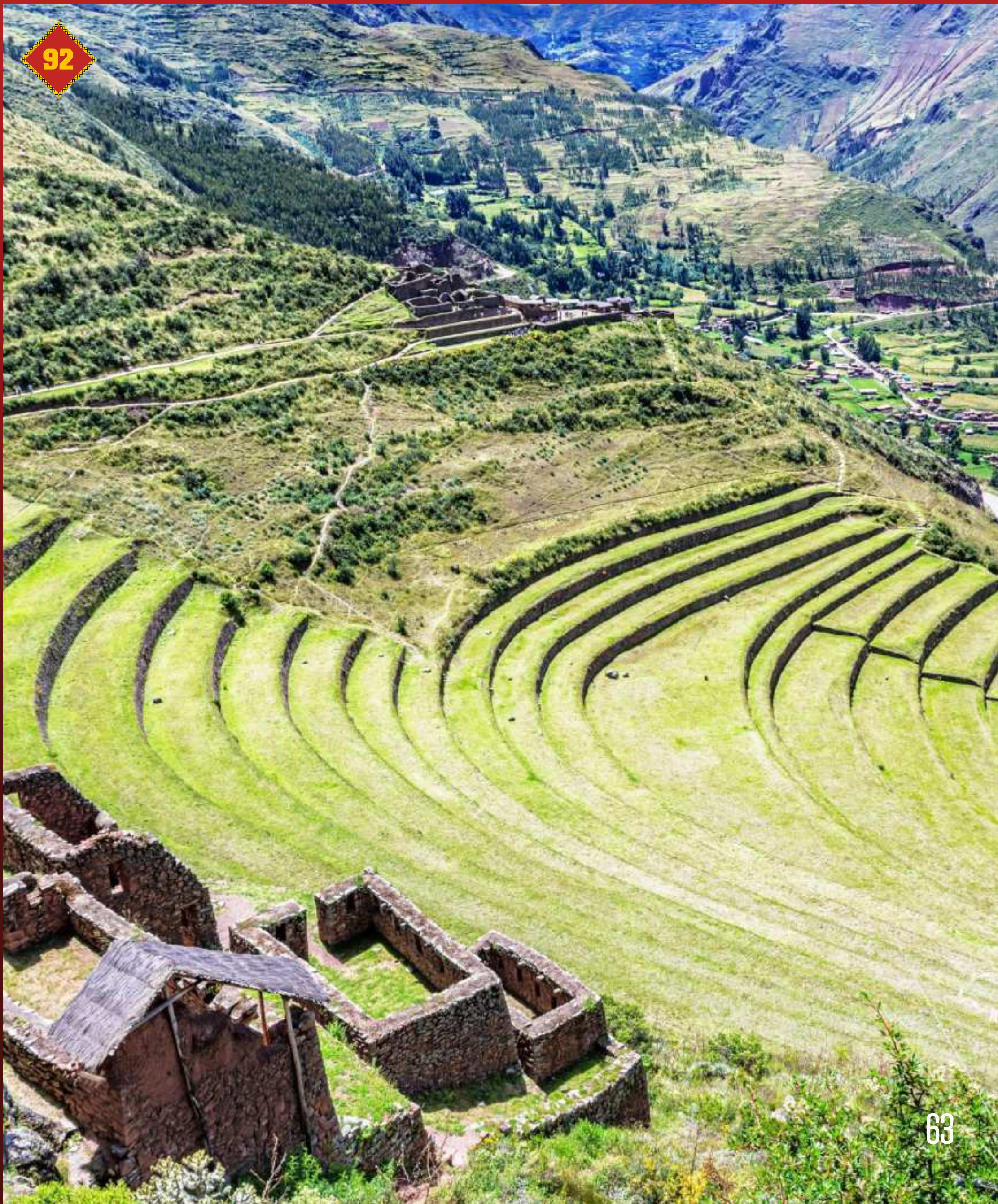

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In the beginning

The gods of the Inca Empire underpinned every aspect of Inca life, from the emperor to the landscape itself

Written by Edoardo Albert

In the beginning, the great god Viracocha made the Earth and the sky and, seeing the land empty, made giants to people it. But while Viracocha had created land and firmament, he was yet to set the Sun in the sky and the giants he had made walked in darkness. In the darkness these first people disobeyed their creator, falling into ways of pride and arrogance that displeased Viracocha. Arising in wrath, Viracocha destroyed these first people. Some he turned into huge stones that still stand to this day; the rest he drowned in a terrible flood that rose above even the mountains. Of all the people only two, a man and a woman, survived the flood. They hid in a box that floated on the waters until the flood subsided and they emerged to find themselves at Tiwanaku, southeast of Lake Titicaca. Tiwanaku was the home of Viracocha. Taking the man and the woman, the great god raised from them all the different peoples and nations of the Earth, creating each new nation in clay figures and dressing the figures in their national garb. Setting the clay figures before him, Viracocha breathed on them and they lived. For the god's breath carried life and soul into the figures of clay.

Seeing the fathers and mothers of the nations before him, Viracocha ordered them to go under the Earth and emerge where he told them. So the fathers and mothers of the nations did as the god instructed, passing below and emerging into the air - some from hills, some from trees, some from springs. Each of the new nations made a shrine to mark the place where they had come out from under the ground into the air.

To light the Earth and the sky, Viracocha ignited the Sun and fashioned the Moon and the stars. Then the great god ordered the Sun and the Moon and the stars to go to Lake Titicaca, to an island within the lake, and there rise up into the sky to be a light forever more for the nations he had fashioned out of clay.

The Sun, Inti, rising into the sky in the form of a man, called out to the people below, the Inca, and to their chief, Manco Cápac, saying, "You and your descendants shall be masters of many nations. Look to me as your father, and you will be my children, and you will worship me."

As a token of his covenant with the Inca people, Inti gave to Manco Cápac a headdress and a battle axe. The great god Viracocha commanded the Sun and the Moon and the stars to climb high into the sky, where he fixed the stars in their places.

Viracocha also commanded Manco Cápac and his family to go once more beneath the Earth. Emerging at the cave of Paqari-tampu, Manco Cápac, father of the Inca people, saw the Sun rise on the first day of the world.

And so came to pass the dawn of the world. Or at least, that's the story in one version of Inca creation myths. The conquistadors made a systematic effort to expunge Inca religious beliefs after the conquest, so for much of the content of what has come down to us we are indebted to the accounts of a small number of friars and priests who interviewed Inca people and recorded their tales of Inca beliefs and practices. Some of the apparent clashes between the myths might be down to these chroniclers mistaking the stories they were being told, but on the other hand, the myths of polytheistic pantheons can appear contradictory, although these apparent clashes are often the result of changes in religious practice.

The Inca religion saw the rise and fall of various gods even during the relatively short period of the Inca zenith before the arrival of the conquistadors. The version of the creation recounted above bears evidence of some of the reworking that had

The Sun rising in splendour over Lake Titicaca. According to Inca myth, the very first sunrise took place from an island in this lake

Machu Picchu was probably first built as a pleasure resort for the ruler Pachacuti

> "The dead were mummified and brought out at family celebrations, when they were given food and drink to sustain them in the spirit world"

already occurred in Inca religious thought and mythmaking. The great shift, according to scholars, occurred after the accession to power of Pachacuti in 1438, the Inca ruler who turned the Kingdom of Cusco into the Inca Empire. (Most archaeologists also ascribe Machu Picchu to Pachacuti's reign, the hilltop city being created as a pleasure resort for the emperor.)

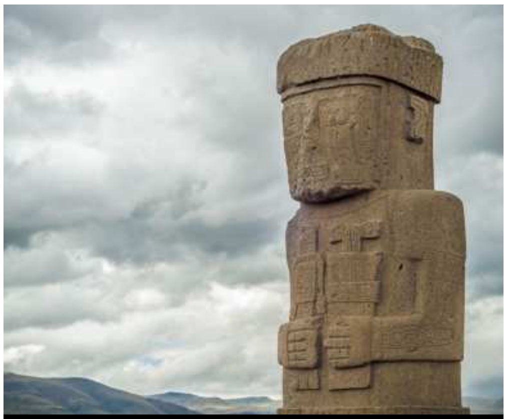
It was victory over the rival Chanca people that precipitated the Inca rise to power, that victory being presaged by a vision to Pachacuti of a figure, garbed as the Inca, with pumas between his legs and snakes wound around his arms, who told Pachacuti that he would be victorious and conquer many nations. Pachacuti identified the figure in the vision as Viracocha. In gratitude to the god, Pachacuti introduced and fostered his cult, raising him above the other, older gods in the Inca pantheon through his depiction as the creator god.

Similar shifts have occurred in other pantheons around the world. For instance, in India, Indra, the sky god of the invading Vedic tribes, was originally the most hallowed of the gods but was gradually supplanted by Vishnu and Shiva. As for Viracocha, his cult was most likely local before Pachacuti elevated him to imperial deity, a huaca of the people living around Urcos, about 50 kilometres from Cusco, the capital city of the Inca Empire.

While the Inca imposed its new state religion upon conquered peoples, suppressing the local cults in a way that, ironically, prefigured the Spanish suppression of the Inca state religion, the huaca remained the unifying factor binding the local folk religions to the new state religion. For the native peoples of South America, the landscape, and its natural forces and faces, were imbued with spiritual, numinous power.

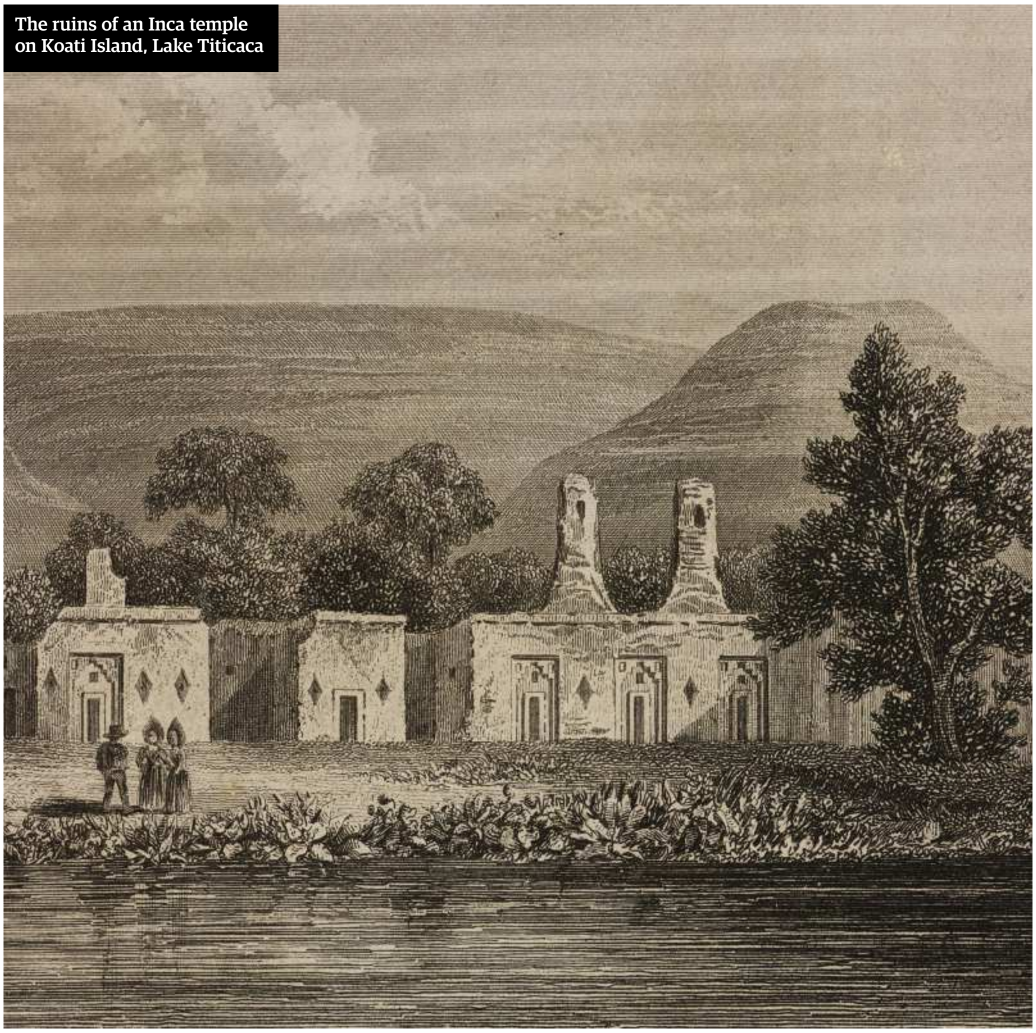
Huaca is a crucial concept of Inca religion and might best be translated as 'holiness'. Huaca was sacred, but given the range of places, beings and states associated with sacredness, much could be described as huaca, including temples, tombs, mountains, caves, streams, rocks and trees in the physical realm; spirits, dreams and dead ancestors in the psychic realm; and rituals in the field of human activity.

All of these could be huaca, because all of them might signify a nexus in the Kay Pacha (the Middle World, whose symbol was the puma and which was the arena of human life and activity) of the



Viracocha was generally represented as carrying two staffs, as in this monolith at Tiwanaku, Bolivia

Cusco, erstwhile capital of the Inca Empire and pole of the world, as it appears now with the Plaza de Armas lit



The ruins of an Inca temple on Koati Island, Lake Titicaca

meeting of the Hanan Pacha (the Upper World with its symbol, the Andean condor) and the Ukhu Pacha (the Inner or Lower World, symbolised by snakes and the depths under the Earth). Places of huaca could be found all over the landscape, charged with power and holiness by being the meeting point of the two great realms that existed above and below everyday reality.

While huacas could be states or rituals, they were most commonly places, notable features of the landscape that the native peoples believed to be either the homes or the bodies of spiritual beings, linking the physical and the spiritual as the Inca emperor himself fused the human with the divine. A huaca was often the totem for a local chief.

In another ironic prefiguration of what would happen when the Spanish arrived, Inca conquerors would often deliberately destroy or desecrate the huacas of a conquered people to break the link between the defeated local chief and his spirit power and to demonstrate physically, in this world, the triumph of their gods over the local gods in the Hanan Pacha - the Upper World.

Huacas were not, however, isolated outposts of the spiritual in a physical world but rather hot spots in a landscape that was envisaged as being criss-crossed by sight lines called ceques that linked together all the huacas in a radiating network of spiritual power that had its centre in Cusco. The ceques were linked to the particular huaca they connected to and, moving this sacred landscape into the calendar, each one had a holy day in the Inca calendar when it was particularly venerated.

Huacas extended to the dead too, in a particularly visceral manner. The dead, particularly a family patriarch, were often mummified and their remains kept in the family home to be brought out at family celebrations or funerals, when they were given food and drink to sustain them in the spirit world, thus ensuring continuing good relations between the living and the dead.

> "All important occasions were marked by sacrifice to the gods. Some of these ritual sacrifices were daily affairs"

As well as family occasions, the dead were consulted through divination to learn the inclinations of the gods and also to encourage them to intercede with the gods on behalf of their living relatives. Religious rituals were likewise huaca, as was the Inca emperor, an embodied huaca whose sacred status allowed the unique, taboo-breaking customs - including sister marriage - that were permitted him. These customs, reserved for the emperor, also served to mark him out as the meeting place of the three realms.

In the same way that the dead ancestors were both propitiated and fed by offerings of food and sacrifice, so were the Inca gods. All important occasions were marked by sacrifice to the gods. Some of these ritual sacrifices were daily affairs, such as the dawn offering of corn, roasted on hot coals, that were given to the Sun to affirm the position of the Inca people as the children of Inti. The poncho of the Sapa Inca was also ritually burned each day. To mark the start of each new lunar month, a herd of white llamas were driven into the great square in Cusco and shepherded before the images of the various gods before being

Inca New Year

The festival for the turning of the Sun

While the Inca Empire spread through warfare, its foundations were agricultural. As such, the festival for the winter solstice, when the days start getting longer, was central both to its calendar and its belief system. Inti Raymi (the festival of Inti) marked the solstice and, since the Inca Empire is in the Southern Hemisphere, it occurred in June. In Inca mythology, Inti, the sun god, returned to earth on 21 June, which was when the festival began. However, for the first three days of his return, Inti was weak, still bound to the Earth. It was only on 24 June that the rejuvenated Sun god ascended once more into the sky and the Inca celebrated the start of a New Year. The festival of Inti was marked throughout the empire but had its focus in Cusco. There, for the first three days, the Sapa Inca and his nobles fasted alongside the earthbound Inti, their sustenance limited to white corn and a herb. Then, on 24 June, the day of Inti's ascension, the priests relit the fire in the central temple and the Inca partook of a sacred drink, based on corn. Then the feasting began. Three days of celebration with eating, drinking, dancing, body painting (bright yellow) and sacrificial offerings before finally a replete Sapa Inca returned to his palace, showered on his way by a rain of feathers and flower petals.

A reconstruction of the festival of Inti Raymi, based on the account of chronicler Garcilaso de la Vega, has been taking place in Sacsayhuamán, Peru since 1944 divided between a gathering of priests - one for each day of the lunar month - and sacrificed. The flesh of the llamas was then burned on holy fires, their bones ground down and used as a powder in daily rituals.

While not practising human sacrifice on the industrial scale of the Aztecs, the Inca, too, delivered human beings to the gods, the number and quality of the sacrificial offering depending upon the occasion and the need. The accession of a new emperor required a major blood sacrifice: 200 children, the purest and most unblemished that could be found, being immolated to earn the gods' favour. Most of these imperial human sacrificial victims were taken from the tribes conquered by the Inca.

However, among more ordinary people there was also a belief that the sacrifice of a child was most pleasing to thirsty gods. Tragic evidence of this belief has been found by archaeologists over the last few decades in high caves in the Andes. There, they have unearthed the bodies of children, mummified by the cold and dry conditions, still almost perfectly preserved. The sacrificial child victim was taken up into the mountains and there given drugs, including coca (from which cocaine is derived) and alcohol, that numbed, disorientated and possibly rendered the victim unconscious. The sacrificial child was then left in a cave where the cold both killed and then preserved them.

Inti, god of the Sun, as depicted in a surviving relic of the Inca era

Living in a region of the world that is particularly beset by natural calamities - earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and El Niños every few years - the Inca must have felt their gods to be particularly capricious, which may go some way to explaining their recourse to human sacrifice (although most of the children sacrificed were taken from conquered tribes rather than being of their own flesh and blood).

All the elements of the general folk religion of the various peoples of the Andes were fused together into the state religion that underpinned and justified the position of the Sapa Inca and the rule of the Inca Empire. The previously dominant figure of Mama Pacha, a fertility goddess whose cult was well suited to the needs of peasant farmers, was downplayed in favour of first the Sun god Inti and his progeny, including Manco Cápac, the ancestor of the Inca, and then the great creator god Viracocha, whose cult appears to have been limited to the nobility of the empire.

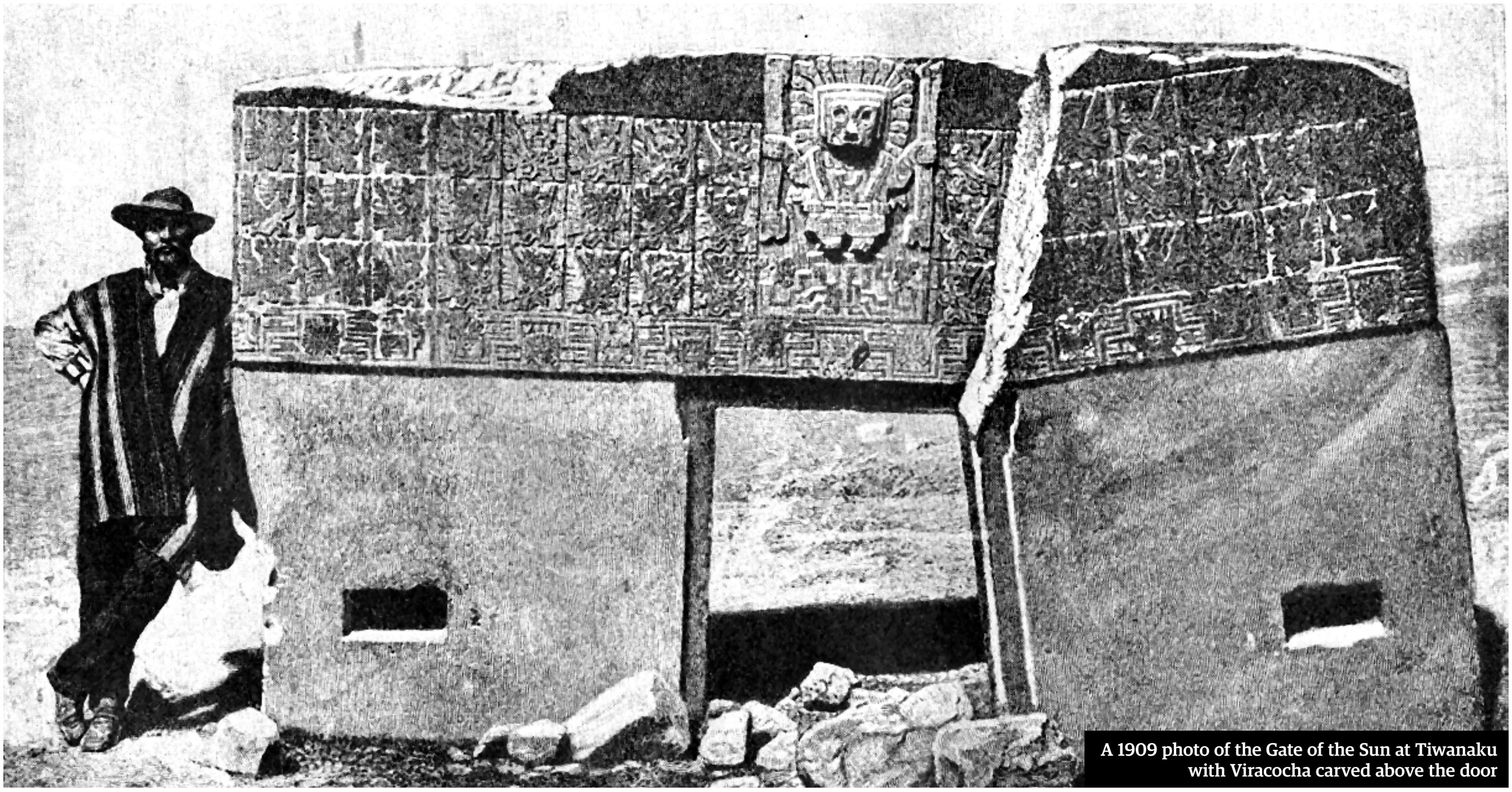
It was through this careful recalibration of myth that the previously provincial city of Cusco became both the political capital of the empire and its spiritual pole. Given the pivotal role played by

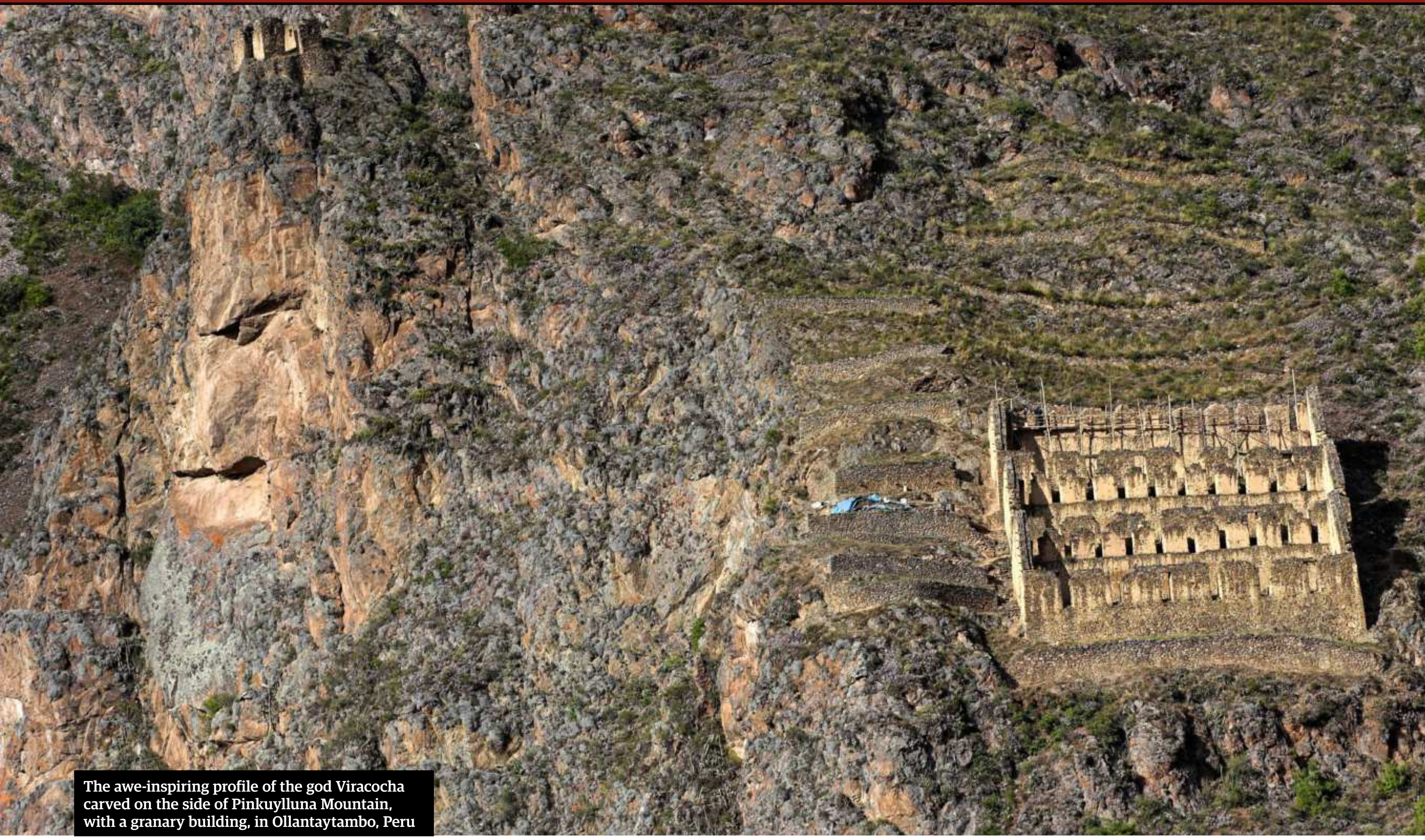
Gods of the Inca

The Inca people had many gods: here are some of the most important

Supay, the Inca god of death, as depicted in a 20th-century Bolivian mask

In a pantheon there are many gods and goddesses. While Viracocha and Inti were the most important to the state religion of the Inca, there were many other gods who played crucial roles in the lives of the people under Inca rule, most of whom were peasant farmers. Among these, perhaps the most popular was Illapa, the god of the storm. Dependent on rain but fearful of the fierce storms of the mountains, Illapa was a force for farmers to appease and placate. Illapa poured rain from the jug in which he kept the Milky Way (which is particularly bright at the high altitude and clear air of the Andes). Mama Killa, the goddess of the moon, was elder sister and wife to Inti and the daughter of Viracocha. A creature of light, she wept tears of silver and was served by consecrated priestesses in her temples. While Inti was naturally associated with Hanan Pacha (the Upper World), Supay, the god of death, took Ukhu Pacha (the Lower World) as his realm.


A 1909 photo of the Gate of the Sun at Tiwanaku with Viracocha carved above the door



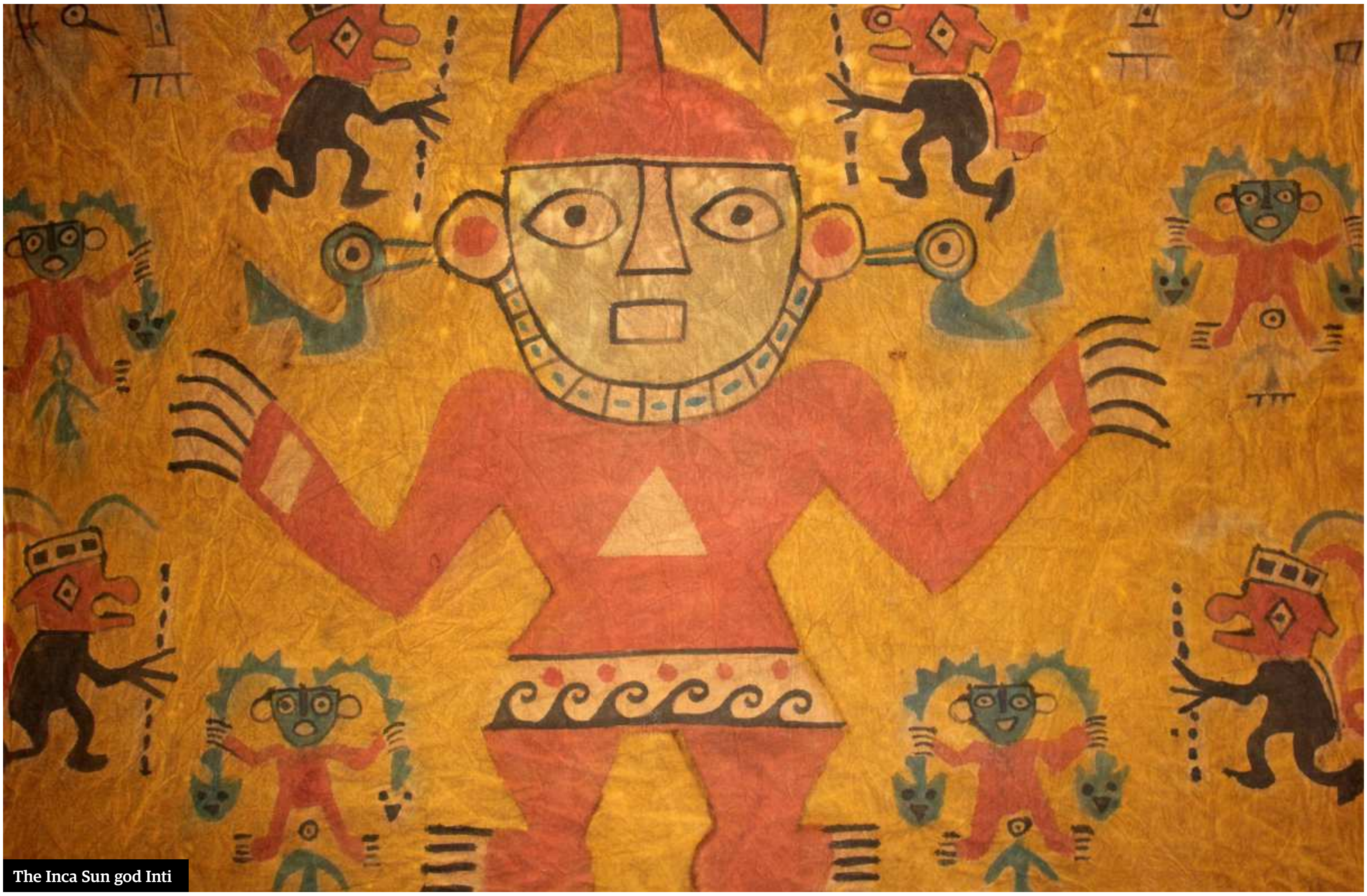
The awe-inspiring profile of the god Viracocha carved on the side of Pinkuylluna Mountain, with a granary building, in Ollantaytambo, Peru

> “The accession of a new emperor required a major blood sacrifice: 200 children being immolated to earn the gods’ favour”

Lake Titicaca in native mythology, the lake on the roof of the world (it lies at 3,812 metres above sea level) would have been the obvious place as the navel of the world – and indeed, both myths and archaeological evidence suggest that it once did play that role.

However, Cusco lies 300 kilometres northwest of Lake Titicaca – too far for it to plausibly share in the lake’s crucial role. But the Inca had a mythological trump card in their culture hero and ancestor, Manco Cápac. As the story went, when Manco Cápac and his wife Mama Ocllo, left the cave of Paqari-tampu, Inti gave him a gift: a wedge made of gold. Leaving the cave and wandering the world in its morning, the couple went north until, reaching the site of what would become Cusco, the golden wedge dropped from Manco Cápac’s hand and, rather than lying inert on the ground, burrowed deep into the ground.

Pachacuti, who carved out a vast kingdom and elevated the god Viracocha to the imperial cult



The Inca Sun god Inti

Thus the gift of the Sun god, dropped from the hand of the culture hero, marked the pole of the world, the centre around which spiritual presences whirled and to which all political power pointed. Cusco was thus destined to be the centre of world empire, and the rise of the Inca was simply the expression of what the gods had ordained.

There were other stories telling how Manco Cápac came to Cusco and made it both his capital and the centre of the new Inca world order, for it is a characteristic of polytheistic religions that different and even conflicting tales ultimately push towards the same ending.

For the Inca, though, this cycle of tales concerning Manco Cápac served both to legitimise Cusco as the capital of the empire and to establish the rights and prerogatives of the Sapa Inca and his nobility, including the emperor being able to marry his sister and legitimising the insignia, ornaments and jewellery worn by the warrior class.

In the same way that the Romans readily appropriated native gods to its pantheon, the conquering Inca were perfectly happy to accept local gods so long as the local lords were willing to accept Inca domination: the local god would be declared an aspect of one of the imperial gods and then welcomed into the Inca pantheon.

The same applied to local huacas - so long as the conquered nobility were happy to go along with being subsumed into the empire. The alternative, for those who proved themselves to be recalcitrant, was to see their huacas destroyed and then re-established, integrated into the system of ceques that connected the far-flung empire back to its heart: Cusco. In the eyes of the Inca, there was no question to answer when it came to whose gods were supreme.

> “In the same way the Romans appropriated native gods, the conquering Inca were happy to accept local gods so long as the local lords accepted Inca domination”

The ruins of the Temple of the Sun on the Isla del Sol in Lake Titicaca

A ceremonial altar table on Isla del Sol in Lake Titicaca that is believed to have been used for human sacrifices

PHOTOS: ALAMY; GETTY IMAGES

Historical Treasures

Miniature gold llama

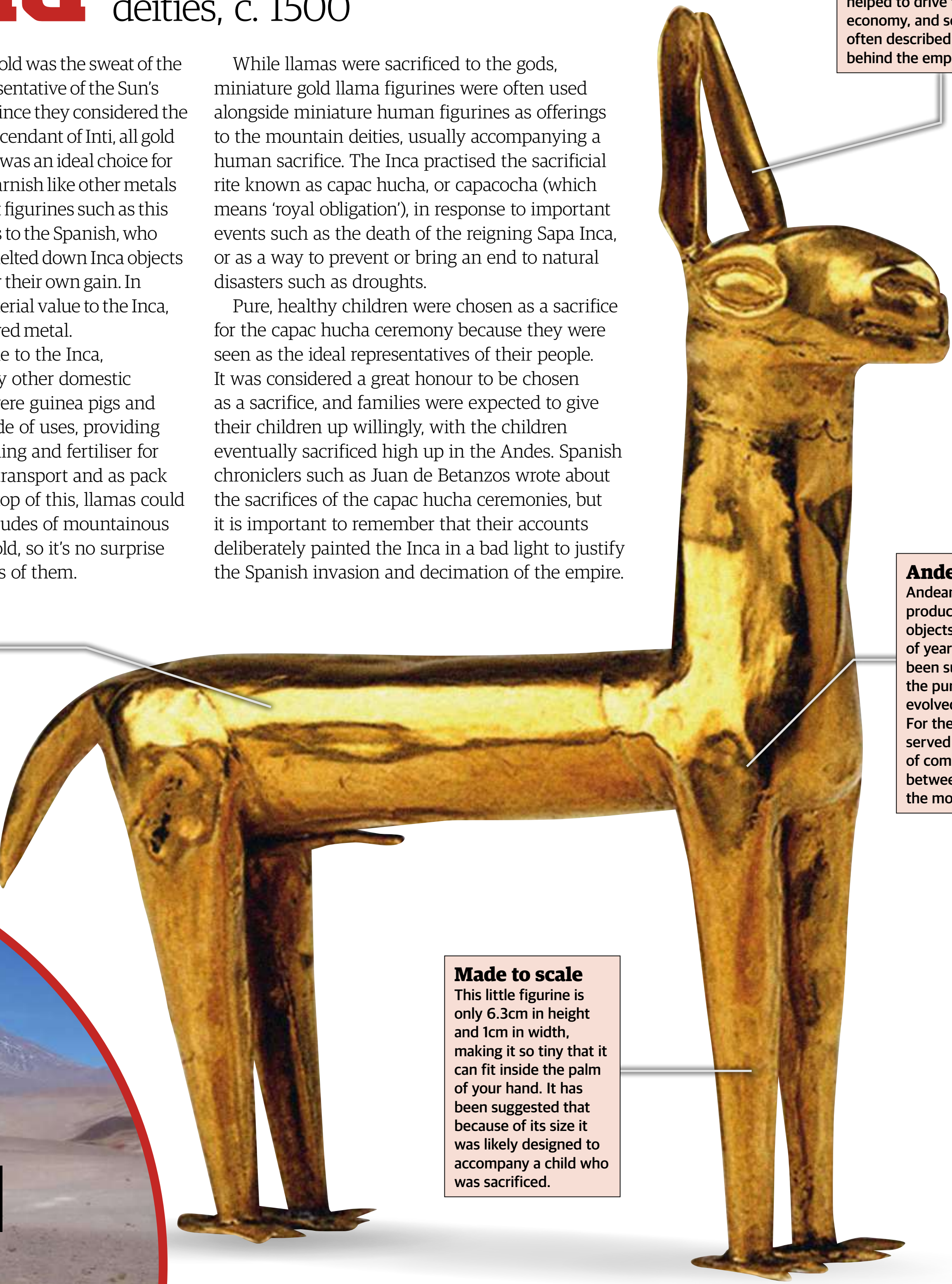
An offering to the mountain deities, c. 1500

The Inca believed that gold was the sweat of the Sun god Inti and representative of the Sun's regenerative powers. Since they considered the Sapa Inca to be the descendant of Inti, all gold belonged to him. Gold was an ideal choice for offerings because it did not tarnish like other metals nor did it perish like food, but figurines such as this one are rare survivors thanks to the Spanish, who conquered the empire and melted down Inca objects made from gold and silver for their own gain. In comparison, gold had no material value to the Inca, who considered it to be a sacred metal.

Llamas were indispensable to the Inca, particularly because the only other domestic animals available to them were guinea pigs and alpacas. They had a multitude of uses, providing meat for food, wool for clothing and fertiliser for crops, as well as serving as transport and as pack animals for the empire. On top of this, llamas could also withstand the high altitudes of mountainous terrain and survive in the cold, so it's no surprise that the Inca bred thousands of them.

While llamas were sacrificed to the gods, miniature gold llama figurines were often used alongside miniature human figurines as offerings to the mountain deities, usually accompanying a human sacrifice. The Inca practised the sacrificial rite known as capac hucha, or capacocha (which means 'royal obligation'), in response to important events such as the death of the reigning Sapa Inca, or as a way to prevent or bring an end to natural disasters such as droughts.

Pure, healthy children were chosen as a sacrifice for the capac hucha ceremony because they were seen as the ideal representatives of their people. It was considered a great honour to be chosen as a sacrifice, and families were expected to give their children up willingly, with the children eventually sacrificed high up in the Andes. Spanish chroniclers such as Juan de Betanzos wrote about the sacrifices of the capac hucha ceremonies, but it is important to remember that their accounts deliberately painted the Inca in a bad light to justify the Spanish invasion and decimation of the empire.



Crucial camelids

The Inca Empire built terrace farms on their mountainous territory, which was made possible thanks to thousands of llamas. The mammals helped to drive the Inca economy, and so they are often described as the power behind the empire.

Precious material

This figurine was excavated in Peru and acquired by the British Museum in 1921, which is where it remains today. Just like other miniature gold figurines from the Inca Empire, this llama is wrought from sheets of hammered gold.

Andean beliefs

Andean civilisations produced miniature objects for thousands of years, and it has been suggested that the purpose of them evolved over time. For the Inca, figurines served as an act of communication between them and the mountain deities.

Made to scale

This little figurine is only 6.3cm in height and 1cm in width, making it so tiny that it can fit inside the palm of your hand. It has been suggested that because of its size it was likely designed to accompany a child who was sacrificed.

Some sacrificial rites were performed at the summit of the Llullaillaco volcano

© Alamy

Love and marriage

How did the Inca find love when marriage was a family business?

Written by Ailsa Harvey

Marriage today is most often viewed as a romantic affirmation of love. It is a display of the happiness two people have found with each other, but it is by no means a requirement or an expectation. For Inca communities, however, marriage came first. It was the necessary path for all young people. They were not welcomed as adults until they were married, and it was the law that they should be.

A 16-year-old girl living in America today is likely to be focused on school, her friends and the end of childhood, continuing to learn about themselves as they approach adulthood. For girls this age in Inca communities, this was the time to be wed. If they hadn't been already, they would soon be matched with a boy that their family deemed acceptable. The groom would usually be a bit older, with males often remaining single until they were 20 years old.

Pairing off young Inca was a serious business, and there was no escape from marriage. At an annual event, the head of each village would gather all 16-year-old girls who were not yet married and all 20-year-old men who had failed to find a partner and they would be put in twos at random. The following process was a quick one.

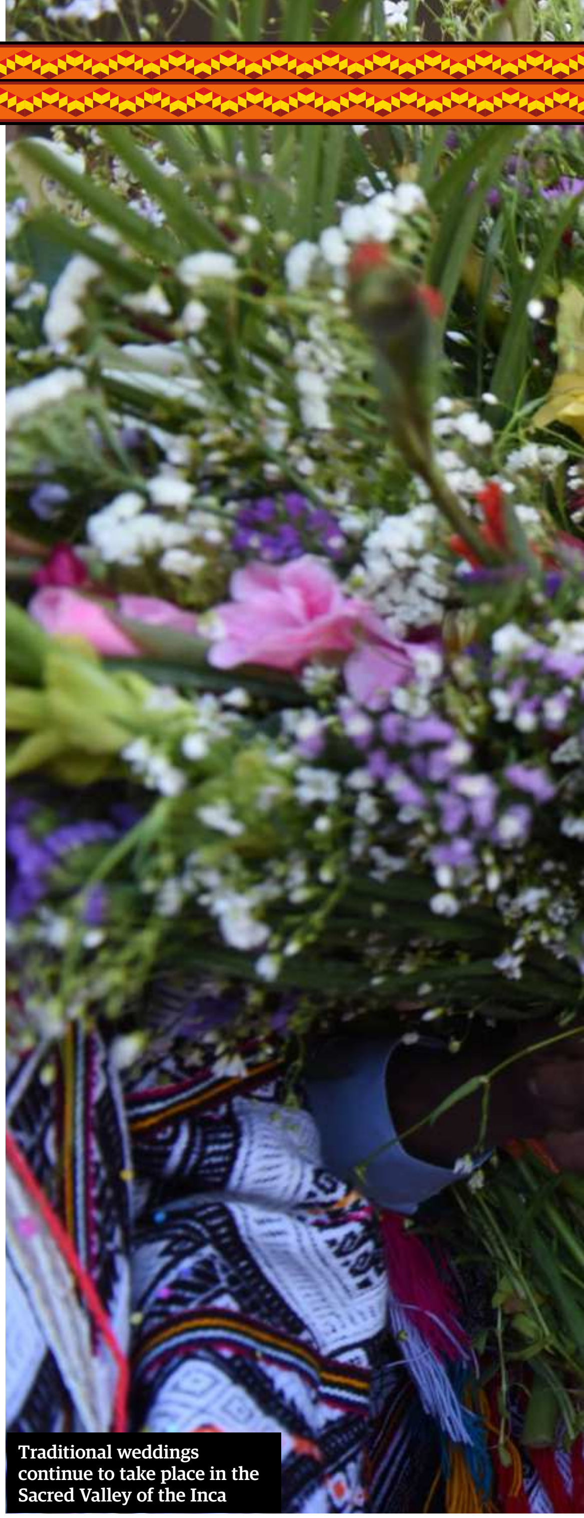
Wedding rings of today symbolise an eternal bond, and many people offer rings to their loved ones during proposals with the hope of hearing them say 'yes'. This gesture was a different one in Inca culture, and it wasn't a 'yes' from the girl themselves that a man would be hoping for, but one from her family. He would visit the house of her family and place a shoe onto her right foot. This symbolised that the man was willing and committed to serving her for the rest of their lives.

When two young Inca met to marry, they had not always chosen each other, but that didn't mean that love couldn't blossom. In some cases the matching process wasn't completely down to the parents. When two young people were fond of each other, they sometimes expressed these feelings as their paths crossed in daily life. They didn't have the authority to make wedding plans among themselves, but as a man grew to like a girl, he could suggest the partnership to his parents in the hope they would approve.

Ultimately, when deciding on pairings, the two people who it would most impact would have the least say. If two families wanted their sons to marry the same girl, they would have to fight for the privilege. Even then it was not for the potential groom to put forward arguments as to why he was a more worthy match; his family would argue his strengths for him. Then the village leader would make the final decision.

The big day itself was a celebratory affair involving feasting, gift-giving and speeches about the expectations of marital life. The bride would often provide her groom's wedding clothing, gifting him with a shirt, headband and metal pin for his wedding cape. In some instances, when the head of the village arranged annual weddings, couples got married in groups. These large events helped with following the law, marrying anyone who had left it too late. The marriage was secured when the groom offered a bag of coca leaves to his wife's family. When they accepted these, they also accepted the joining of families, and the couple would be pronounced man and wife.

Royal couples or those of nobility would have their own home built for them by the groom's family immediately after their wedding so that they could start their new life together. For the commoners of the community, the wife would be sent to live with her new husband's family. Gaining a new member was of great use to the family's livelihood. Inca wives were used to carry out menial jobs around the home, look after any children and be an extra pair of hands. It was almost like gaining an employee rather than a family member.


Traditional weddings continue to take place in the Sacred Valley of the Inca

Although Inca marriage was an arranged affair, outsiders didn't have total say in the pair's fate. The process worked on a trial basis, and if the young pair were totally incompatible, the partnership would sometimes fall through. If after a few years of a marriage the woman was not happy, she could move out of her new family's home and back to her own. Sometimes it would be the groom's choice, and he would force her to leave his family's house. If the couple had already had a child together, the trial period was over and their future together was sealed. The Inca's approach to marriage meant logistics and family ties were more important than the romance. But these trial marriages increased the chances for young people to find happiness with someone, and if they were lucky, maybe even love.

Wedding guests arrive wearing traditional Inca attire

New couples' homes were built using local stone or a clay-like material

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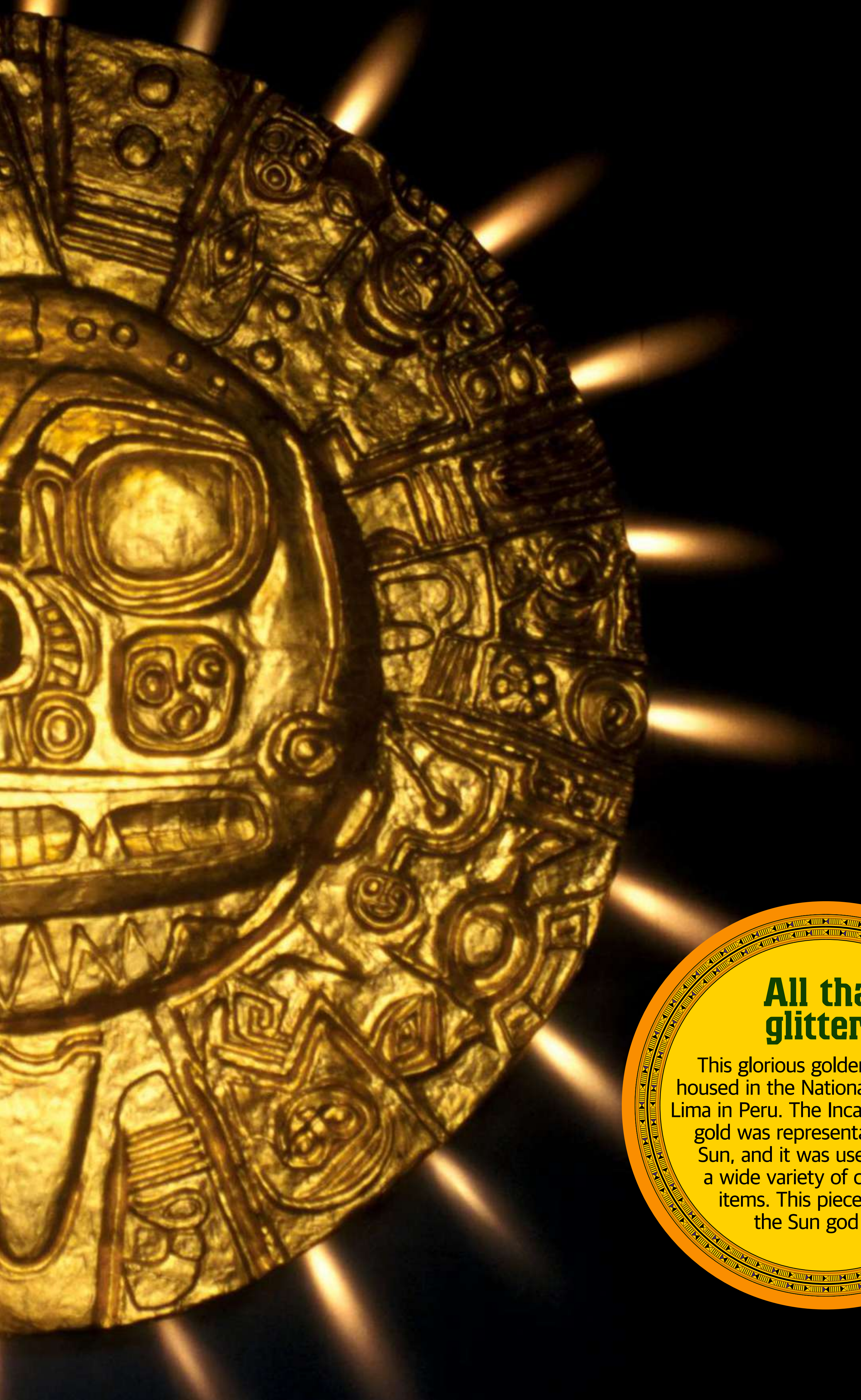


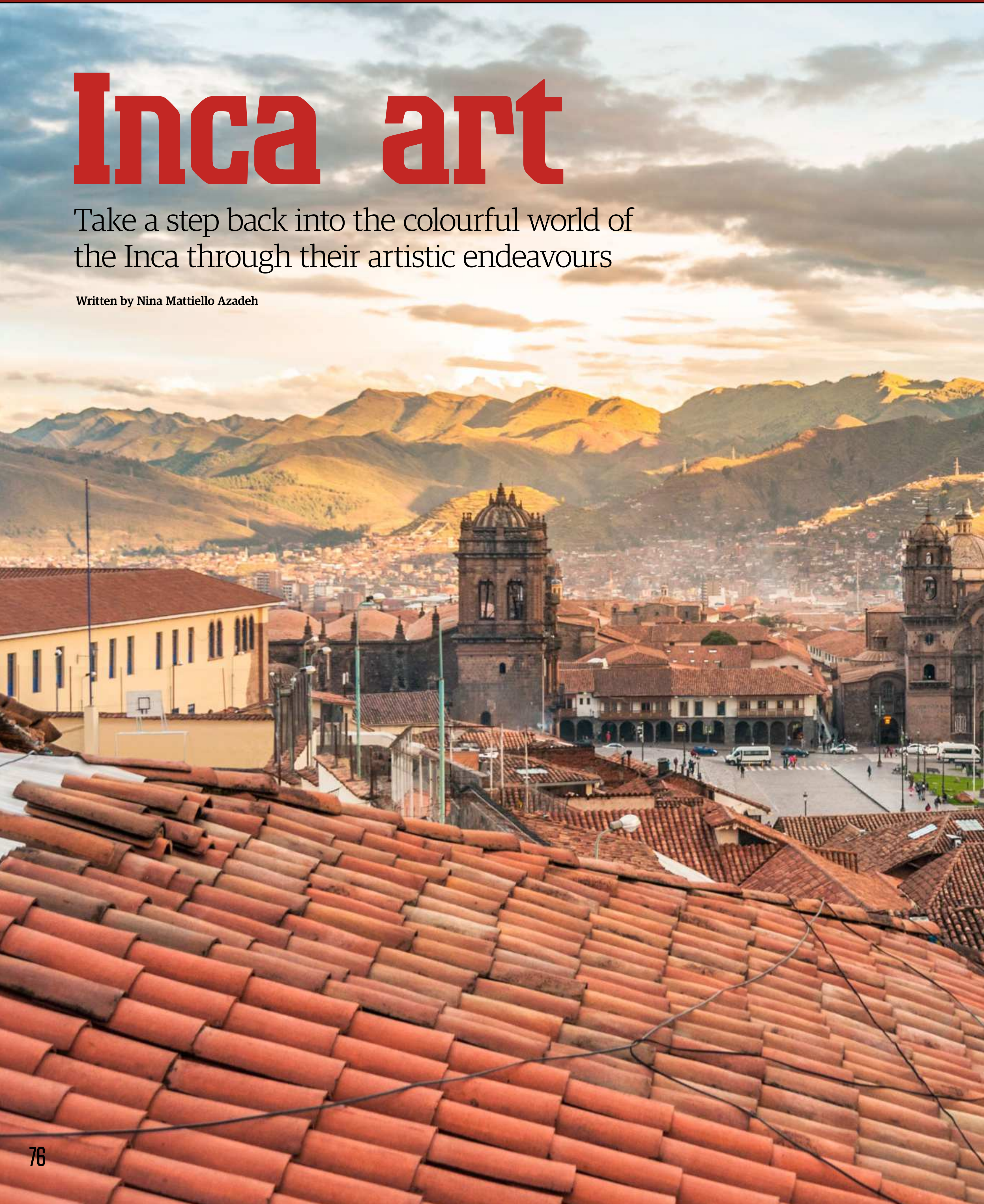
All that glitters

This glorious golden Inca relic is housed in the National Museum of Lima in Peru. The Inca believed that gold was representative of the Sun, and it was used to make a wide variety of ceremonial items. This piece depicts the Sun god Inti.

Inca art

Take a step back into the colourful world of the Inca through their artistic endeavours

Written by Nina Mattiello Azadeh



History

The Inca Empire arose from the highlands of Peru and was ruled from the city of Cusco. From the early 13th century until the Spanish conquest in 1572, the Inca people made their home across pre-Columbian South America. The Inca conquests led to - at its height - an empire boasting a population of over 10 million people.

Inca art - particularly textiles - is influenced by even earlier communities, such as the Inca's Chimú predecessors. Similar artistic elements can be found across many Andean societies, including references to oppositions such as night and day, the Sun and Moon and mountain peaks and river valleys. Inca art, however, did not bear such close resemblances to real life, instead opting for expression through geometric patterns. References to local architecture, agriculture and religion in Inca art are abstract in their design.

Lost art

Original examples of Inca art are rare. The Spanish conquest devastated Inca culture. Many examples of original Inca art were destroyed or built on top of, and much of the gold and silver was melted down for its monetary value. Other items, particularly figurines of gods or artwork created in reverence of those gods, were also destroyed. Spanish invaders did this as a sign of rejection of the polytheistic religion of the Inca people.

The Spanish did, however, also bring their own artistic schools of thought to Inca communities. Artistic efforts after the conquest were focused around evangelising the Inca. Inca artists were taught European techniques, and thus the Spanish Baroque style was brought to South America.

The most famous piece of lost Inca art is a gold statue depicting the god of the Sun, Inti. This representation of Inti was that of a small, seated boy with rays projecting from his head, adorned with gold jewellery. The stomach of the statue was used to hold the ashes of the vital organs of previous Inca kings, burned as an offering. Each day the statue was brought into the temple grounds to bask in the Sun.

The statue of Inti was kept in the Qorikancha (Temple of the Sun) - a sacred complex in Cusco. The Qorikancha had an elaborate garden that was also dedicated to Inti. This garden was filled with gold and silver statues, figurines and plants. It is thought that this garden was a large field of corn created in gold, filled with life-size shepherds, llamas, jaguars, golden monkeys, birds, butterflies and insects. Almost everything at Qorikancha was removed, hidden or destroyed during the Spanish conquest. Only a few golden ears of corn remain.

Styles and patterns

Inca art was set apart from other art created in the Andean region. While designs were often abstract and geometric, they held a lot of meaning. Often

© Getty

A woman with Inca heritage weaving on a traditional loom

Modern souvenirs based on ancient practices for sale to tourists

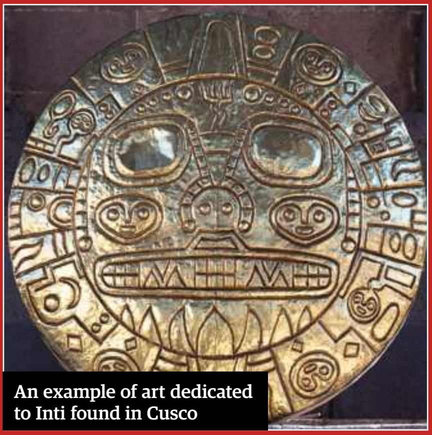
Inti, god of the Sun

The most famous piece of Inca art… never to be seen again

All-powerful Inti was known to be a benevolent god who assisted with the growth of crops but who could also be known to demonstrate power through solar eclipses. Inca rulers believed that they were direct descendants of Inti and that the most senior figure of the Inca religion was also related to Inti. The high priest of the Sun presided over the Qorikancha temple and the ceremonies that happened there.

The statue of Inti took pride of place within the temple and its community. When the Spanish arrived, the statue was taken to a place of safety. Eventually, in around 1572, the Spanish did find it, but it has since disappeared without a trace. It is assumed that it was melted down, like many Inca artefacts, for its worth in gold.

Other representations of Inti have survived. They often have zigzag rays that surround a human face. Inti lives on in modern South American culture with the festival of Inti, known as Inti Rayma, having been revived in Cusco. The currency of Peru was even called inti during the 1980s and is now known as sol, meaning 'Sun' in Spanish.


An example of art dedicated to Inti found in Cusco

> "Inca art was set apart from other art created in the region. While designs were often abstract and geometric, they held a lot of meaning"

the significance of these patterns would vary among communities and even between weavers. Natural and animalistic features recur – swirls to symbolise the tails of pumas or blue diamonds to symbolise lakes. Religious symbols also feature widely among Inca patterns. The chakana symbol is often referred to as the Inca cross and symbolises a star that is visible from the Andean Mountains that the Inca people saw to represent the source of the seasons.

Patterns

The most popular pattern found within Inca design is a chequerboard design. Repeated patterns, known as tocapus, were either embroidered, painted or stamped across cloth before it was made into clothing or other items. Non-geometric subjects were also often depicted in abstract ways, including jaguars, pumas, llamas, snakes, birds, sea creatures and plants.

Colours

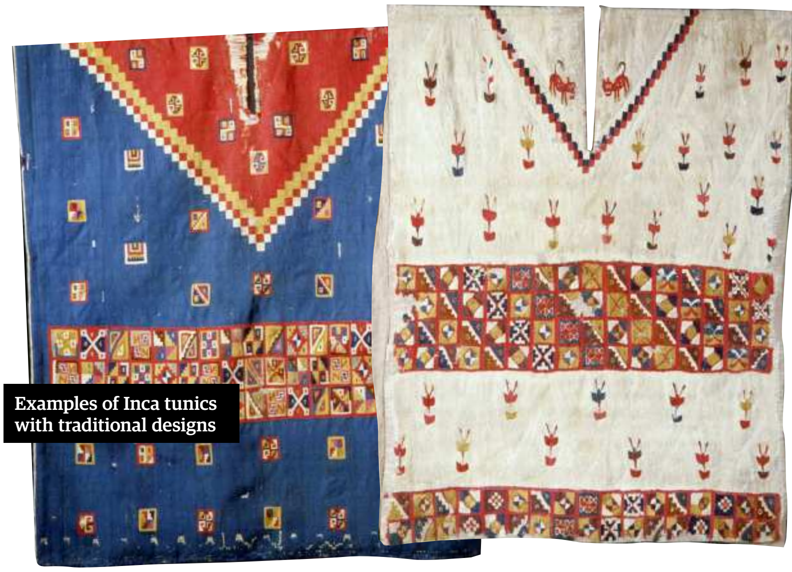
The primary colours used within Inca art were black, white, green, yellow, orange, purple and red. These colours were made from natural dyes, with the colour often being derived from minerals, insects, molluscs, plants and fires.

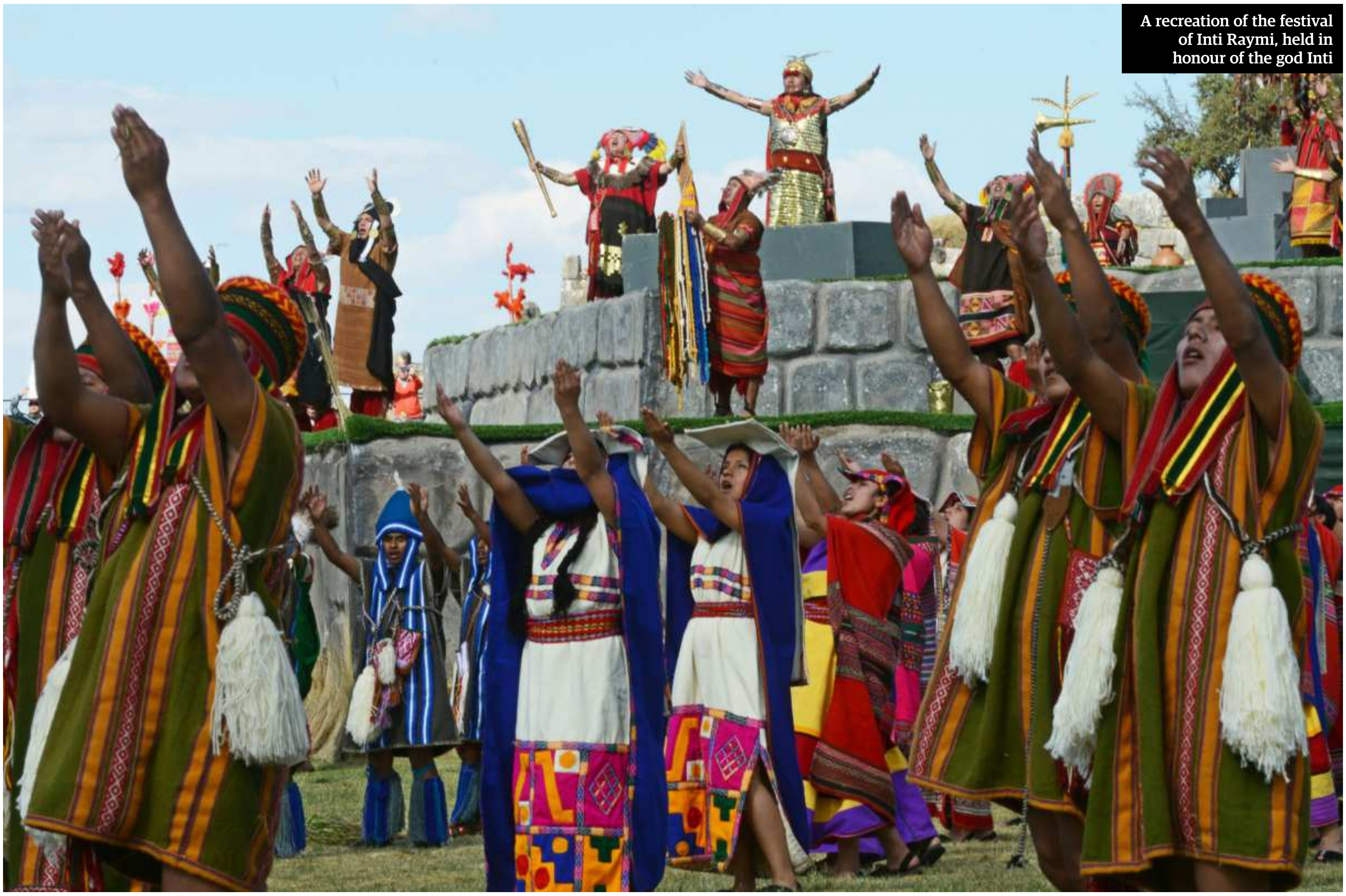
The colours used were laden with meaning. Red was a symbol of conquest, rulership and blood. The Inca state emblem, known as the Mascapaicha, was embellished with a red tassel. Each of the red threads woven into this tassel symbolised a conquered people.

Other meaningful colours included were green to depict rainforests, the people of the rainforest, tribal ancestors, rain, agricultural growth, cocoa and tobacco plants. Yellow was used when depicting maize but also in forms of gold to show royalty and prestige. Black was a more spiritual colour, often used to depict the giving and taking of life through creation and death. Purple, too, was a way of connecting with a spiritual realm. It was often used to symbolise Mama Ocllo – the founding mother of the Inca race.

Mediums

There is evidence of Inca art across a broad range


Examples of Inca tunics with traditional designs



A recreation of the festival of Inti Raymi, held in honour of the god Inti

of mediums. The primary mediums that have been found are textiles, pottery and metal. Lots of examples of these have been found in mountain burial sites. The Inca and other Andean civilisations mummified their dead and buried them, with the most common site being around the Cajatambo Province in the highlands of central modern-day Peru. All Inca burials began with a type of mummification in cotton textiles. Depending on wealth, these textiles became more elaborate. Some members of Inca society were accompanied by gold and silver items, while others were buried with tools or ceramics.

Textiles

Not much survives of original Inca textile art from the heartland of the empire. However, there are examples that have been found in the highland burial sites. We also have pictorial evidence of how textiles were used and even worn from the drawings of Spanish chroniclers.

Embellishments and decoration were symbols of status and wealth for the Inca people. The finest cloth was thought to be more precious than gold or silver and was even known to be used as currency. Similarly, those who created these detailed materials were regarded as the highest-skilled and most technically accomplished craftspeople in the Americas. Both men and women created textiles, but women of all ages and classes were expected to be accomplished weavers. The most expert weavers were known as qumpicamayocs, or 'keepers of the fine cloth'.

Different weaving equipment has been found: backstrap looms used for smaller pieces, and horizontal looms and four-pole vertical looms used for larger works. Inca weavers would also spin their own wool using a drop spindle.

Wool was derived from native animals: llamas, alpacas and vicuñas. Goods made with the extremely soft and rare vicuña wool were used and worn by the Inca ruler exclusively, as only they could rear herds of vicuña.

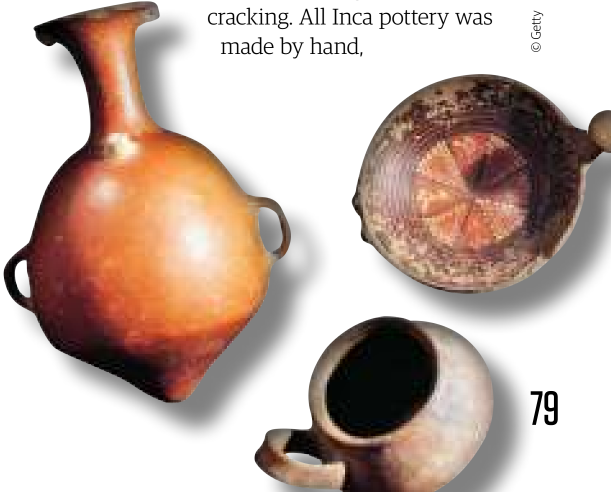
Clothing

Inca tunics were made of woollen fabrics and designed with simple patterns. These patterns usually featured a square design at the waist and a triangle around the neck. An example of this can be found in the standard military tunic, which featured a black-and-white chequerboard pattern with a red neck triangle.

The wealthier an individual was, the more decorated their clothing could be. Decorations took the form of tassels, brocades, metal beads and shells that were woven into the fabric. Feathers, which were often from rare tropical birds, were the height of adornment and strictly reserved for Inca royalty only.

Pottery

Inca pottery was made with natural clay that was mixed with mica - a mineral found within rock formations - sand, crushed rock and shell. These elements were added to make the pottery items more hard-wearing and to prevent cracking. All Inca pottery was made by hand,



© Getty

This elaborate funeral mask is made of gold and sapphire

starting with a base of stacked coils of clay. These coils were then smoothed into a singular shape using a flat stone. Items were then fired using two different methods to create different-coloured pottery. To create red, yellow or cream pottery, clay was oxidised through a firing method. To create black pottery, a reduction method was used that removed oxygen during the firing process.

Ceramics

The Inca's basic pottery methods were used to create intricate yet practical ceramic items. Most ceramic items were used for storage or for eating. Many items were decorated, some with zigzags and dots and others with abstract plant motifs. Examples found in the city of Cusco were more elaborately decorated and often black and red in colour.

The most common shape is known as an urpu – a bulbous vessel with a long neck, flared lip and two handles – and was used to store maize. The urpu also had a pointed base so that it could be stuck into the ground to ensure stability. Other

“Metal was also used to cast figurines. Small gold and silver figurines are some of the only surviving examples of Inca gold”

commonly found ceramics include large, flat serving dishes with handles shaped like animal heads. Similarly, bowls and pairs of beakers called geros have been found made from both ceramic and wood.

Ceramics were also used during rituals. Paccha – meaning ‘waterfall’ – were hollow tubes shaped like a foot plough and decorated with plant motifs. Paccha were put into the ground so that maize beer could be poured into the ground as part of a ritual to promote a good harvest.

Metalwork

As with lots of Inca materials, there was a hierarchy of metals and stones used throughout Inca metal craft. Precious metals were reserved for Inca royalty. Copper was a popular material, and other alloyed metals were used for practical items. Gold and silver pieces could also be inlaid into bronze to increase durability.

Gold and silver could be made into many things: jewellery, figurines, ceremonial knives known as tumi, and even the soles of the shoes of noble people. Inca royalty also drank from gold and silver beakers. Using these precious metals represented religious ideas. Gold was used to represent the sweat of the Sun and silver to represent the tears of the Moon.

Copper could be decorated with semi-precious gemstones, polished bone and shells. However, it was also used for practical items. Copper and bronze were used for basic tools, farming equipment and weapons. Copper, tin and bronze were mined in all provinces, making them a popular yet cheap material.

Uses for metal

Lots of examples of Inca jewellery have been unearthed, including earrings, earspools (what is known now as an ear plug), bracelets and dress pins. All of these have been embellished in different ways depending on who owned them.

The tunic of an Inca nobleman from a looted tomb, encrusted with gold beads

Metal was also used to cast figurines, many of which have been found in burial sites. Small gold and silver figurines are some of the only surviving examples of Inca gold. These figurines were placed upon graves as offerings. They would often represent young men and women who would accompany the dead. Alternatively, economically significant animal figurines were offered to the gods both at burial sites or in temples. Figurines were highly prized and could be cast with up to 18 sheets of gold and carved with lifelike details. Other religious materials were also cast in gold and silver and were often representative of natural phenomena that the Inca people thought to be sacred. Examples have been found of representations of the Sun, Moon, stars, rainbows, lightning, waterfalls and more.

Modern art

It has been nearly 500 years since Spanish conquerors destroyed a large part of the Inca’s cultural heritage. Nonetheless, evidence of the Inca’s legacy can still be found in modern-day Peru and the Andean region.

Inca textiles are incorporated into the colourful traditional clothes of Peru. The ancient textile traditions were even recognised by UNESCO in 2005. Since the 1960s groups of Peruvian women have worked hard to preserve and revive the weaving practices of their ancestors. They sell these items to tourists in a bid to continue funding their work.

Metalwork and jewellery-making can now be done on a much larger scale across the Americas. As the primary income in Peru is now tourism, examples of Inca jewellery and figurines can be commonly found. However, much of the art on sale is mass-produced.

It is possible to find work by independent artists or groups that live in rural communities. This art is often set apart from the rest due to its intricacy and detail. These artisanal skills are preserved solely through the passing of the trade down through generations of families.

As we get further away from the work of their forefathers, Inca artists seem more inclined to embrace their Spanish influences, as well as other styles. Inca art, it seems, is fighting to find its place within modern Peruvian society. That said, many artists continue to bring the Inca to life in honour of their ancestors.

Small but mighty

These llamas have been found in some precarious places

Llama figurines are some of the only surviving Inca artefacts. Most are no bigger than around six centimetres tall, with some around 23 centimetres. It is said that there were even life-size llama figures in the Qorikancha temple at Cusco, although these were all destroyed and melted down during the Spanish conquest. They are now commonly reproduced as souvenirs for tourists. Originally these figurines were handcrafted out of solid gold or silver and were esteemed items.

Llamas were a very important animal to the Inca people. They provided materials through wool and could carry heavy burdens. They became a symbol of Inca society – symbolising generosity and plenty. They were also sacrificed in large numbers to the gods, particularly those that the Inca people believed resided in the mountains.

These figurines were often given to accompany sacrifices to the gods. They were given in pairs: one silver and one gold. Although seemingly small and delicate, these llamas accompanied human sacrifices, often child sacrifices to the gods. These often took place in sacred mountains to show allegiance to Inca rulers.

Small llama figurines such as this one have been found across the former Inca Empire

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Inca architecture

How the Inca built magnificent buildings that have stood the test of time

Written by Baljeet Panesar

The Inca are renowned for their incredible buildings, which can still be seen in the ancient capital of Cusco, Peru, and the surrounding areas. They were once the largest and most powerful empire in South America, using their extraordinary skills and exceptional knowledge to construct great buildings, cities, roads and water systems.

To build a successful empire you need a way to get around, so the Inca constructed one of the most advanced and intricate road systems of the ancient world, the Qhapaq Ñan. It includes over 30,000 kilometres of roads, bridges, tunnels and causeways that cross six countries: Columbia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Chile and Argentina. In some places the roads can reach altitudes of over 5,000 metres. To construct these roads the Inca used local materials. Wood, stone and bronze were used to make tools, building and improving the roads that the Wari, Tiwanaku and Chimú cultures had built centuries before.

Western South America is home to diverse and difficult terrain, including mountains, desert and forests. The Inca adapted the road to the natural environment, using small stone walls, paving stones, stone piles and earth to adjust to the challenging terrain. Most roads were between one and four metres wide, enough for a person accompanied by a llama. In the mountains the Inca cut steep steps into the rock, while in the desert small stone walls were built to prevent sand from landing on the road. Most of the original road has since been destroyed, with just 25 per cent of the former route remaining today.

The Inca also developed an efficient postal system, where runners called chasqui delivered messages across the empire. This worked like a relay system, with a runner positioned every six to nine kilometres. This allowed food or messages to be sent 240 kilometres in a day.

The Salkantay trek is a five-day walk that passes through the cloud forest and Andean Mountains

© Getty

> **“Most of the original road has since been destroyed, with just 25 per cent of the former route remaining today”**

The most iconic example of the Inca’s impressive stonework is Machu Picchu. Constructed 2,430 metres above sea level, it’s made up of around 200 buildings, ranging from temples to baths. Most of these buildings were built using a technique called ashlar, where the stone blocks were cut to fit together without the use of mortar. These stones were cut with such accuracy and fit together so precisely that even a piece of paper can’t be placed between them. This building style does have an engineering benefit, as Machu Picchu is built on top of two fault lines in a seismically active zone. During earthquakes the stones are said to ‘dance’ – they move around but fall back into their original position once the tremors subside. Despite many of the stones weighing over 20 kilograms, the Inca didn’t use wheeled transport. Instead, hundreds of men pushed the heavy stones up the mountain, where they were then precisely shaped.

Another impressive feat of engineering is Qorikancha, which is located in the former capital of Cusco. The puma-shaped city contains the most important temple in the Inca world: the Temple of the Sun. This temple was so sacred that some of its walls were covered with 700 gold sheets, each weighing two kilograms. One wall was said to have been dotted with emeralds. Most of the original building was destroyed by the Spanish conquistadors, who built a cathedral on the site, leaving only the Inca’s stone foundations intact. Hundreds of years later an earthquake struck the city, severely damaging the cathedral but leaving the foundations still standing, demonstrating the Inca’s unrivalled engineering skills. Most of the gold that once covered Qorikancha’s walls was melted down and sent to Spain.

Most of Qorikancha’s walls incline inwards between three and five degrees as the structure gets taller. This is a notable feature of Inca architecture, giving the building a trapezoidal shape, and with the rounded edges the buildings are more stable and less likely to fall during an earthquake. The Inca were also talented astronomers: the two towers at Qorikancha were used to mark the solstices, identify Inca constellations and observe the Milky Way.

Tipón is considered to be the water-engineering masterpiece of the Inca. Constructed as part of a country estate for nobility, water fountains, canals and waterfalls serve as a testament to the Inca’s ingenuity and advanced engineering skills. There are some water channels that are functional and still serve the local people today. These water channels irrigate the land with fresh water from a natural spring at the top of the site, which covers an area of more than 590 acres. With little flat land in the mountains, the Inca carved into mountains to create terraces called andenes.

The terraces are cleverly designed to prevent soil erosion by heavy rainfall. This was necessary precaution, as over a metre of rain lashes the Andes every year. The Inca's sophisticated terracing system could control water that was captured in the underground drainage system, which was then used to irrigate land.

The success of the terracing method depended on the four different layers that made up the terrace. The base was made from large rocks, followed by smaller rocks, sand and topsoil. The terraces were also designed to trap heat during cold nights, which prevented the loss of crops due to frostbite, and release heat during the hotter months.

From grass to rope

The centuries-old tradition that's still used to build a bridge

To connect the valleys and canyons of the Andes, the Inca pioneered bridge building to further expand and strengthen their empire, as well as maintain order within it. The bridges were so important to the Inca that the punishment for tampering with a bridge was death.

More than 200 bridges were built as part of the Inca road network, and some of these incredible structures were even longer than the stone bridges constructed by the Europeans. However, over the years the bridges have been destroyed, removed or have decayed, with only one Inca rope bridge remaining: the Q'eswachaka Rope Bridge.

This 35-metre-long rope bridge crosses the Apurimac River in Peru, hanging 20 metres above the water. Each year the bridge is rebuilt using traditional Inca techniques by four local Quechua communities: the Huinchiri, Chaupibanda, Quehue, Ccollana and Choccayhua. Over three days they work together to construct the bridge, which is made from woven ichu grass. The grass is twisted together to form thin cables, which are braided together to form six thicker main ropes. Once ready they are secured to the ancient stone bases on either side of the canyon, and the master bridge-builders finish by weaving the sides and floor of the bridge. The bridge is secure and safe enough to hold dozens of people.

This bridge-building tradition has remained relatively the same for more than 500 years

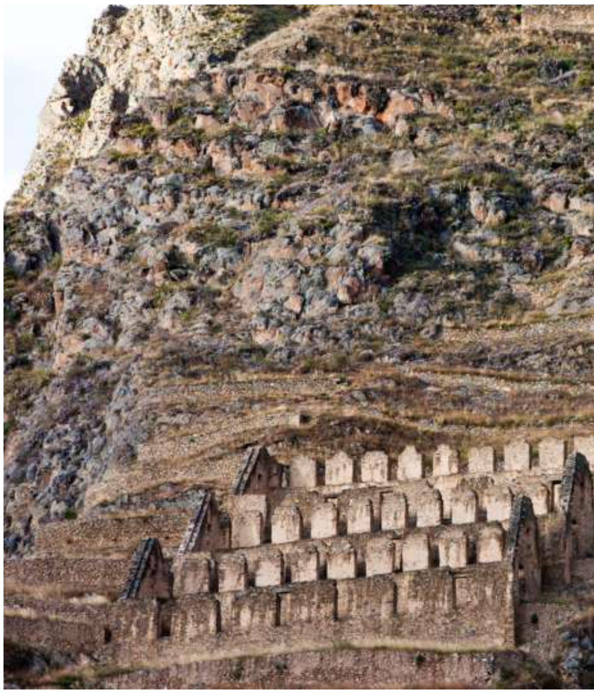
At the northern edge of Cusco is Sacsayhuamán, a fortress that has the honour of being the largest building constructed by the Inca. In order to complete the project, 20,000 labourers were tasked with the challenge. Using various tools, the labourers would shape the huge stones at the quarry. (Archeologists have found stones that were left en route to their destination, as well as examples that had not been finished at the quarry.) These stones were then moved to their final position using logs, ropes and earthen ramps. Some stones still bear the marks of the labourers' hands and the tools they used to shape them. Some of the stones weigh up to 200 tons, making them some of the largest used for building in pre-16th-century South America. After the arrival of the Spaniards, the site was disassembled one block at a time for other buildings in the city of Cusco. Only the stones that were too large to move were left.

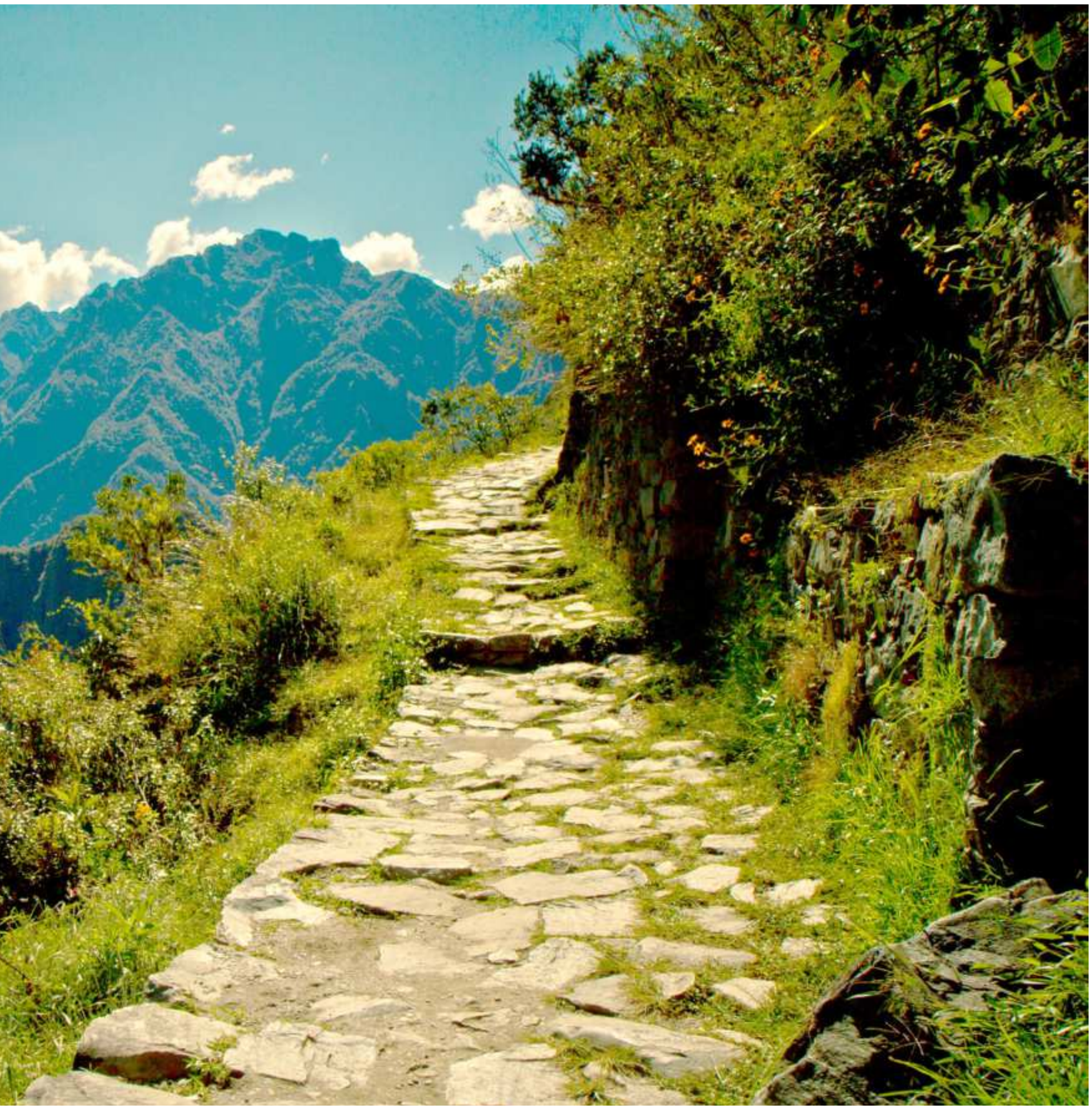
In Ollantaytambo, people still live in the houses that served the Inca hundreds of years ago, and it is probably the best-preserved Inca town. During the reign of the Inca, Ollantaytambo was the home of the emperor Pachacuti, who built the town. Storehouses, terraces, a canal system and more were built to create an incredible and innovative architectural site. On the hillsides close to the town, the Inca also built a number of storehouses, or qullqas, using fieldstone. These were used to store goods like potatoes and grains. This hillside location was cooler and more windy than at lower altitudes, allowing perishable goods to be stored for at least two years. Drainage canals and gravel beneath the floor also helped to preserve stored goods, demonstrating the Inca's remarkable knowledge and ingenuity.

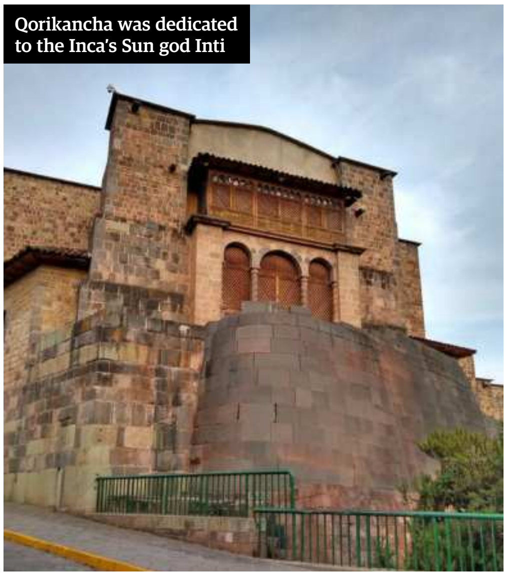
The Wall of the Six Monoliths is one of the most memorable sights in Ollantaytambo. This wall was created by moving stones from a nearby quarry. Archaeologists are not sure of its purpose, but believe that it was used to observe the winter solstice. There are other larger blocks of stone in the area that have been abandoned for reasons that will never be known.

Although they started out as a small tribe in Cusco Valley, in less than 100 years the Inca conquered and controlled most of western South America to become the greatest empire the region has ever known. The growth of the empire relied on the Inca's extraordinary engineering feats, ingenuity and innovation. They were able to build roads, bridges made from grass, walls and irrigation channels all without the use of modern tools in the rocky terrain of the Andes. Amazingly, some of these buildings are still standing 500 years later in an area that is prone to earthquakes – proof of their magnificent stonework, which is bound to impress all those who are privileged enough to see it for themselves. They were capable of seamlessly integrating the surrounding landscape into their buildings and would consider celestial bodies and events when designing their buildings too. Because of this, the Inca are arguably one of the most admired civilisations of the ancient world.

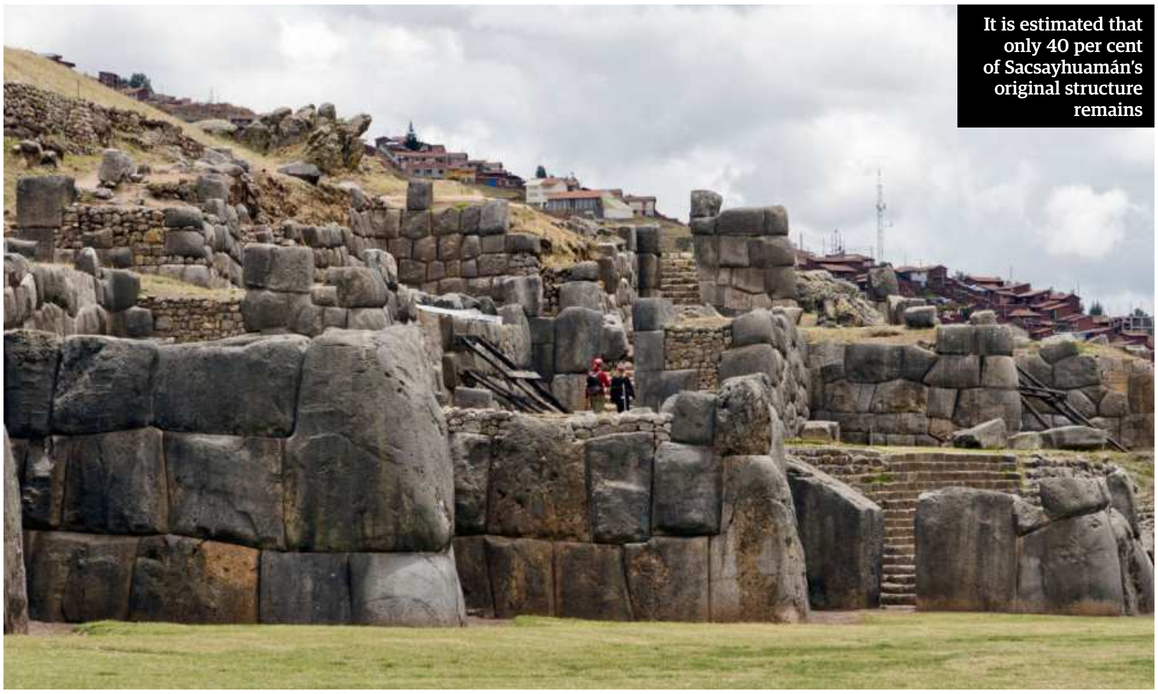
Roads were built without the use of iron tools, draught animals or the wheel





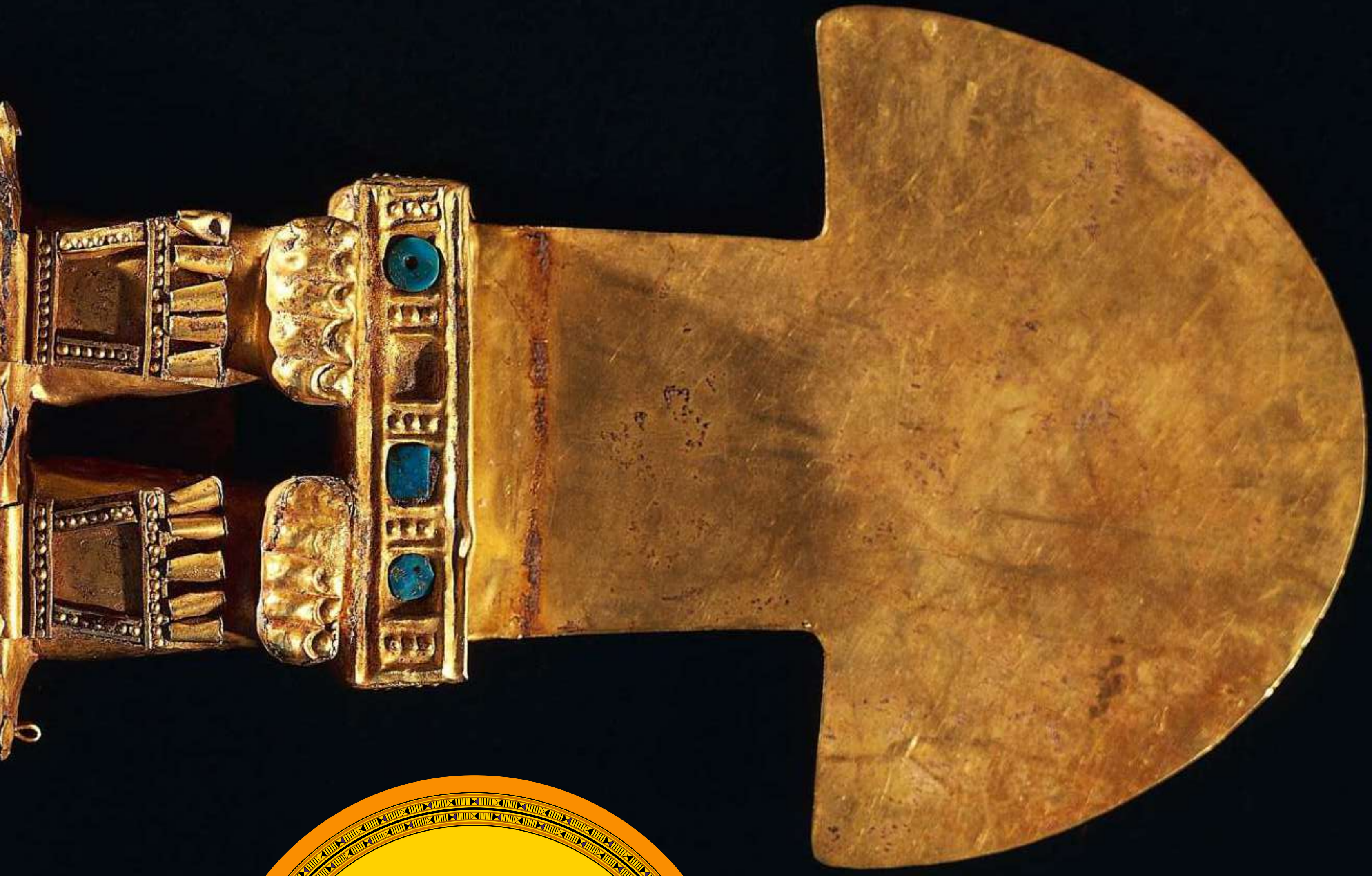


Qorikancha was dedicated to the Inca's Sun god Inti



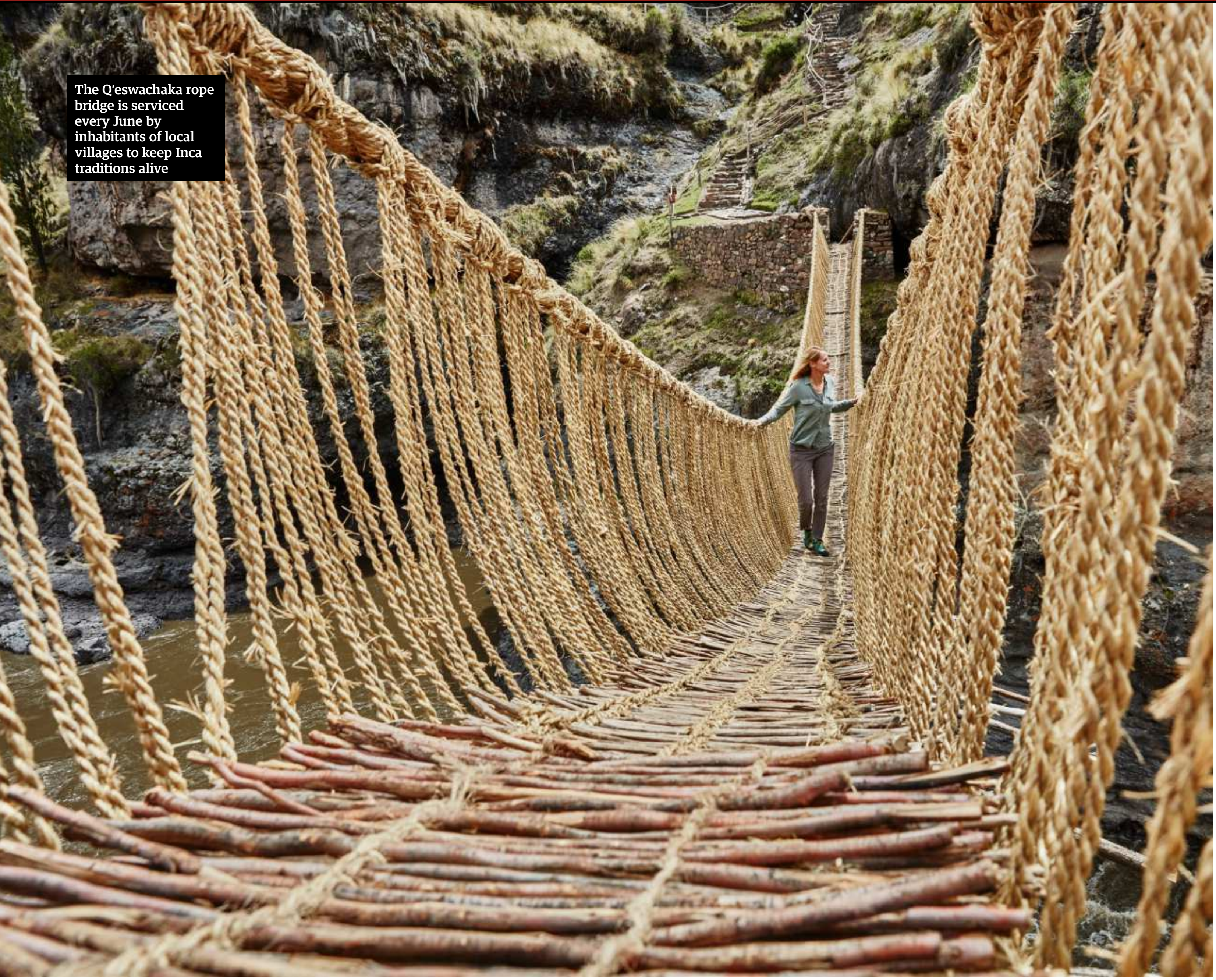
It is estimated that only 40 per cent of Sacsayhuamán's original structure remains

© Getty, Alamy



A cut above

This incredibly detailed golden ornament is in fact a ceremonial knife, or 'tumi'. A tumi was used for a variety of purposes, including as a medical tool, hunting or sacrificial knife and even as a pendant. Many of the Inca elite were buried with one.



The Q'eswachaka rope bridge is serviced every June by inhabitants of local villages to keep Inca traditions alive

Inca technology

Discover the ingenious innovations that enabled the Inca Empire to thrive

Written by Scott Reeves

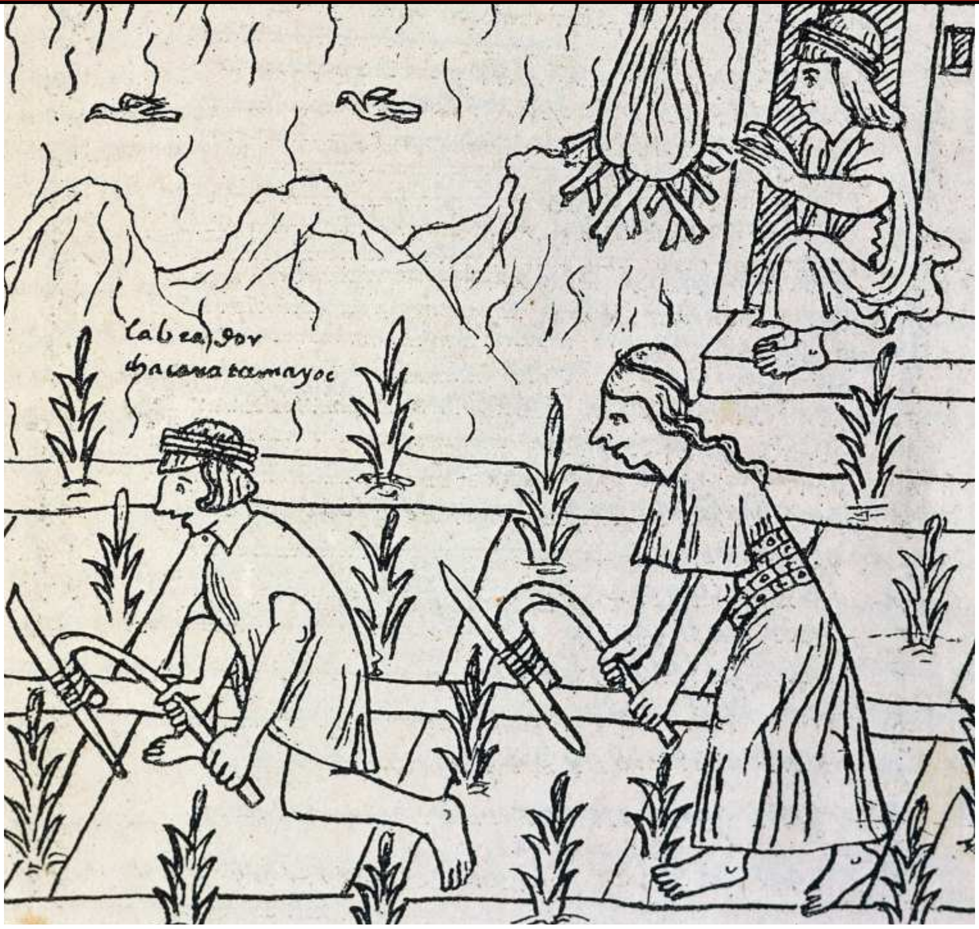
When Spanish explorers first reached Inca lands in the 1520s, they were staggered to discover an advanced civilisation that had developed in parallel with those in Europe. The Spanish travelled through villages, towns and cities collectively home to 10 million people and observed that there was plenty of food to satisfy such a large population, a centrally planned economy, an organised system of government and an accepted religious tradition. However, on closer inspection the Inca lacked what the European newcomers considered to be basic technology. Where was the wheel, writing and iron tools? These advances had been discovered across the Atlantic many years before. How did the Inca create a society without what seemed to be essential knowledge and skills? Perhaps the answer is not in the technology that the Inca lacked, but in the technology that they did have. With clever innovations they developed alternative solutions to some of society's fundamental needs.

Tools

The equipment that built cities of stone

In a world without iron, the Inca still managed to build massive cities in the mountains. They did have the ability to cast bronze and copper, although these softer metals probably took a back seat to tools made from obsidian, a volcanic glass that could be splintered to create a sharp edge. Building stones were selected from whatever was available in the local area - often granite or limestone - and split along natural fracture lines. They were then shaped to fit by pounding and sanding them with stones. Without wheels, stones were heaved into place using brute force. Inca construction certainly relied on human power.

Farming was also a hard, manual task. Ploughing was done with the chaki taklla, a two-metre-long wooden plough that was driven into the earth by foot. Its rounded, sharp point, sometimes covered in bronze, created a small furrow. Behind the plough, other farmers would wield a waqtana, a wooden club used to break up stubborn clods of soil. Lastly, a wooden-bladed rawk'ana was used to hoe weeds and dig up the harvest. In the kitchen, food was prepared using sharpened stones, obsidian knives and stone pestles and mortars.



The Inca built roads across most of South America using only basic tools

Transport

The roads that tied the empire together

The Romans may be famous for their road building, but the Inca were pretty good at it too. At its peak the Inca transport network crossed the empire with over 30,000 kilometres of roads. Some were simple dirt paths a metre across, while others were covered in hard-wearing paving stones and reached four metres wide - plenty of room considering all travel was made on foot. The main thoroughfares were two parallel highways running north to south: one along the coastline, the other through the mountains. Smaller roads branched off to connect provincial towns and villages.

Tough terrain proved no problem. Packed earth road beds were raised on causeways, and buttresses were built to keep them above swampy wetlands. Surface water was removed through drains and culverts. Contours were followed to keep gradients as flat as possible, although this was not always possible in the mountains.

Deep gorges and valleys were crossed on intricate rope bridges weaved from grass, cotton and alpaca and llama wool and paved with wood and sticks. Though they may have appeared rickety and required maintaining every year, the bridges were strong enough to carry alpacas loaded with cargo and could stretch as far as 46 metres.

Getty Images

Any old iron

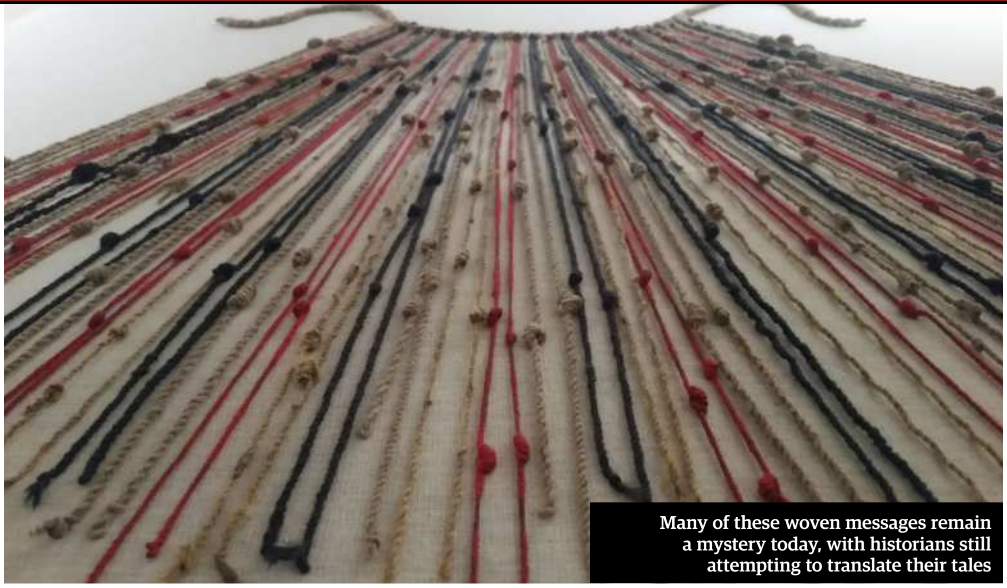
The lack of certain technologies proved fatal to the Inca after the Spanish arrived

Inca innovations were well matched to the needs of the pre-Columbian Americas, but when the Spanish arrived in the 1520s, the Inca were ultimately outmatched by superior technology. Perhaps the greatest weakness of the Inca was a lack of iron smelting. The Spanish came armed with iron breastplates, helmets and tassets to protect their thighs. They carried deadly rapiers, broadswords, pikes and halberds and could fire from a distance with crossbows, muskets and cannons. The Inca, by contrast, were protected by quilted cloth armour and carried wood and leather shields. For weapons they relied upon slings, bows and arrows, clubs and axes.

The Spanish also introduced horses to the Americas, an animal that would go on to have a huge impact across the continent. Prior to their introduction the Inca had domesticated only llamas and alpacas – both a species of camelid, but the llama was typically double the size of an alpaca – and used them for meat, wool, leather and to carry goods. However, they were not used as draft animals to pull heavy loads, nor were they ridden to cover long distances more quickly.

Travel was made even more difficult considering that the Inca did not use wheels. Although the concept of the wheel was probably known to them – they probably used rolling logs to shift heavy stones during construction – the mountainous terrain of the Inca heartland meant that wheeled transport simply wasn't an efficient way to get around.

Christopher Columbus' arrival saw deadly new technologies introduced to the Americas that native tribes could not withstand

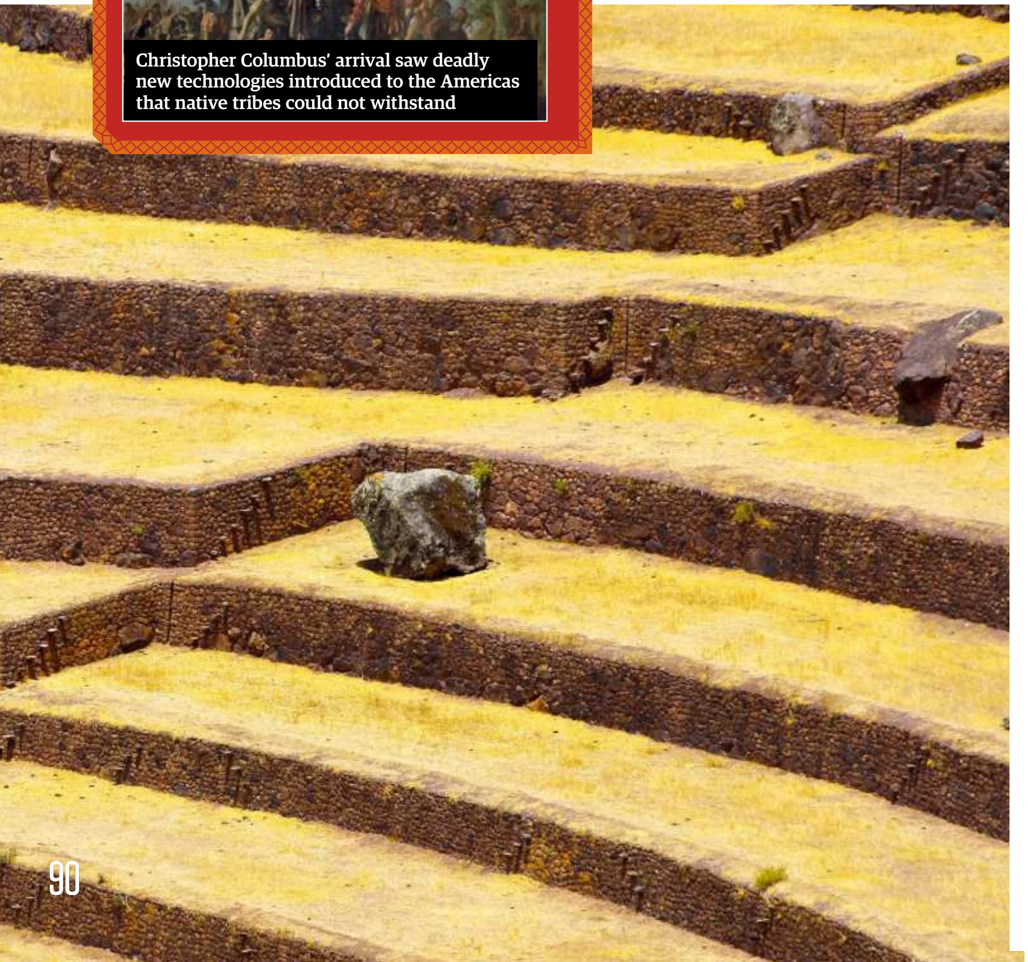

Many of these woven messages remain a mystery today, with historians still attempting to translate their tales

Measurement

The records that documented a complex society

They may have lacked writing, but the Inca were still avid record keepers. Their method of choice was the khipu, a complex arrangement of knotted strings of various lengths and colour that hung from a primary cord. The exact code the khipus used is still unknown – historians hope to one day find an Inca version of the Rosetta Stone that will unlock their secrets – but it is believed that the position, type and number of knots formed a decimal counting system. Messengers probably carried khipus to the capital so government officials could keep track of taxes, warehouse stock and population levels.

To measure the passage of time, the Inca adopted two separate calendars. A solar calendar was used to plan the farming year. Four towers were built east and west of Cusco to mark the position of the rising and setting Sun in August and September, indicating when the two crop planting seasons had arrived. The lunar calendar, based on the phases of the Moon, marked when ritual ceremonies should take place. However, since the lunar year was shorter than the solar year, it had to be regularly adjusted or the two calendars would gradually slide out of sync.

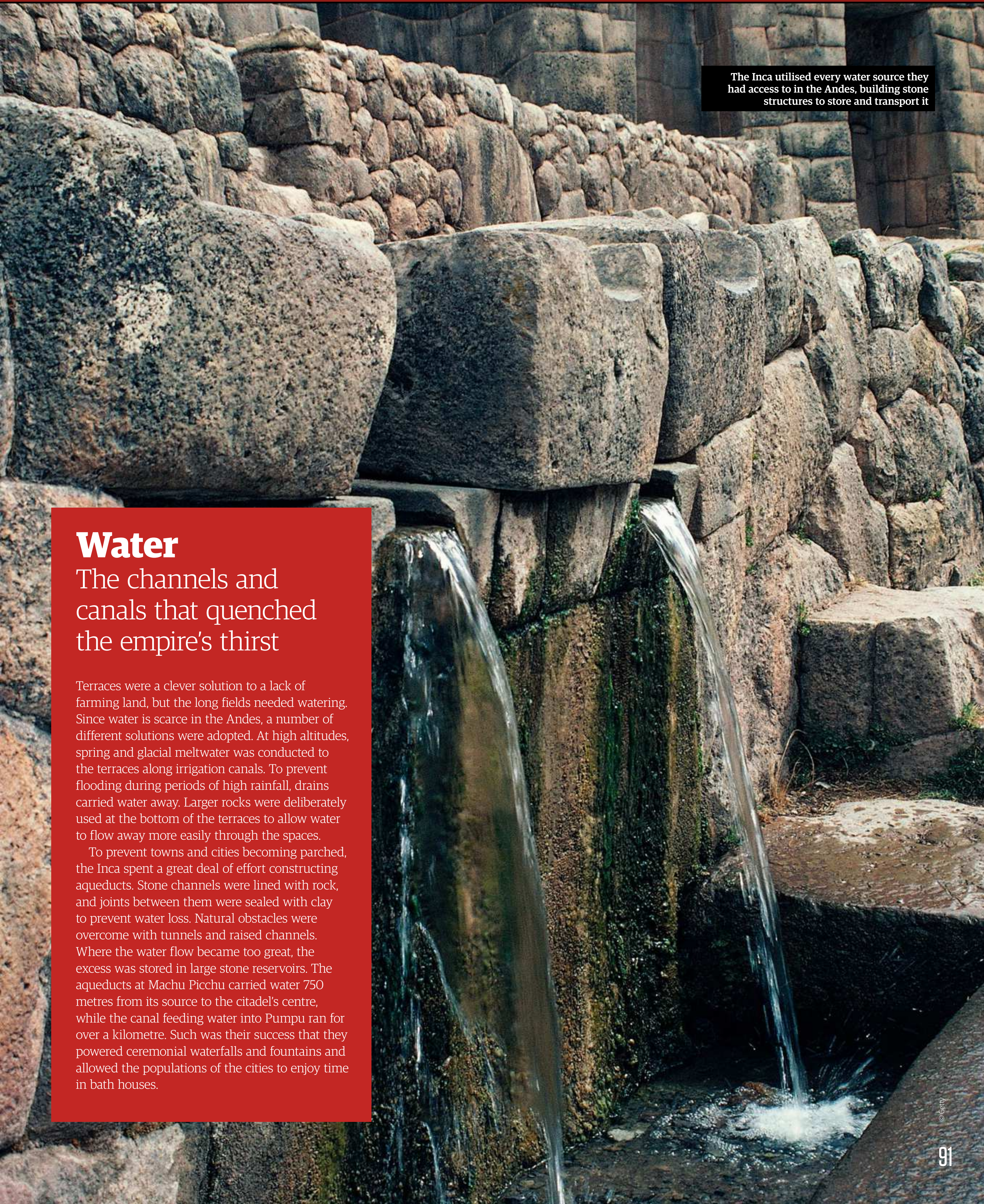


Agriculture

The farming techniques that stopped the Inca starving

The mountains aren't an obvious place for an agrarian civilisation with millions of inhabitants to flourish. To overcome a shortage of flat land to grow crops on, the Inca carved terraces into the sides of hills and mountains to create staircases of long, thin fields following the contours. To prevent slippage down the hillside, each terrace was filled with a base layer of gravel, an intermediate layer of sand and a layer of top soil into which corn and potatoes were sown. Sometimes a terrace was used to grow three crops at once. First corn was grown, and when it reached a certain height, beans would be planted and encouraged to wind up the stalks of the corn. Finally, squashes were planted in any remaining gaps.

Once crops were harvested, the Inca had an ingenious system to preserve them for the cold winter months: freeze-drying. Potatoes were covered with a cloth and left outside overnight when the temperature dropped below zero. The next day they were uncovered and allowed to dry out in the Sun. After three nights they were trampled by foot and skinned to create a kind of frozen mashed potato called chuño that could keep for years.



The Inca utilised every water source they had access to in the Andes, building stone structures to store and transport it

Water

The channels and canals that quenched the empire's thirst

Terraces were a clever solution to a lack of farming land, but the long fields needed watering. Since water is scarce in the Andes, a number of different solutions were adopted. At high altitudes, spring and glacial meltwater was conducted to the terraces along irrigation canals. To prevent flooding during periods of high rainfall, drains carried water away. Larger rocks were deliberately used at the bottom of the terraces to allow water to flow away more easily through the spaces.

To prevent towns and cities becoming parched, the Inca spent a great deal of effort constructing aqueducts. Stone channels were lined with rock, and joints between them were sealed with clay to prevent water loss. Natural obstacles were overcome with tunnels and raised channels. Where the water flow became too great, the excess was stored in large stone reservoirs. The aqueducts at Machu Picchu carried water 750 metres from its source to the citadel's centre, while the canal feeding water into Pumpu ran for over a kilometre. Such was their success that they powered ceremonial waterfalls and fountains and allowed the populations of the cities to enjoy time in bath houses.

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View from the farming terraces at the archeological park in the Sacred Valley of the Inca in Pisac, near Cusco, in Peru

Food and farming

Surviving in the varied climate of South America was a daily challenge for the Inca - one that required everyone to do their bit

Written by Bee Ginger

The Inca lived in a remarkably diverse environment, building their homes in the shadow of the Andes, humid jungles and arid coastal regions. Yet wherever they lived, every Inca had the same priority: farming. According to anthropologist T. N. D'Altroy, "The Inca approached farming with weapons in their hands and prayers on their lips."

They were ambitious farmers, transforming their landscape with canals and irrigation systems and building multiple layers of terracing in order to maximise their production. They even drained wetlands in order to make them suitable for farming. Rotating their crops frequently and fertilising the land with fish heads, guano and dried llama dung, every year they hoped for a successful yield. However, this was far from guaranteed. Disease, droughts, floods and a generally harsh climate could result in devastating crop failures.

The Inca worked their land using a range of tools, including foot ploughs, clod breakers and hoes. The blades of the hoes were made using sharpened cobblestones - simple but highly effective. Working on the land was a community effort. With much singing, small teams of both men and women toiled in unison, the men hoeing the soil and the women breaking up the earth and sowing seeds. It was the children's responsibility to tend to the livestock, which mainly comprised of llamas and alpacas.

These camelids were integral to many aspects of life, being used for meat, leather, transportation - for both civilians and the Inca army - and as movable wealth. Each November a state census would be conducted and all the animals accounted for. Some of the larger state-owned herds consisted of tens of thousands of animals.

The Inca state developed a huge farming system supplemented with herds and crops commandeered from conquered farms. Land and livestock was divided into three parts, although these were unequal. One was allocated for the king, the other for locals, and the third for the state religion. This ensured a larger storage network, which was invaluable during times of hardship. Farmers were relocated to work for the ruler's lands, paying their tax in the form of a labour service known as mit'a. They also helped with other projects, such as building and road laying.

A family unit would produce its own food, and each family was part of a wider ayllu (kin group) that owned collective farmland. In order to cultivate a diverse range of foods, the ayllu would farm plots in both the high and lowlands. Coca could only be grown in lower altitudes, while maize and potatoes benefitted from the higher altitudes. The whole ayllu system was very well thought out. When a couple married they were given an area of land for cultivation by the kin in order for them to be able to sustain themselves. This was approximately 1.5 acres in size and called a tupu. Another half a tupu was gifted on the birth of a first child. The land would be returned to the kin only when someone without an heir died. This land would then be redistributed.

A large and vital part of farming for the Inca involved sacrifices and rituals. The Inca believed in many gods, including deities of the Earth, Sun and even corn. A common element between both the upper and lower classes was religion, and it was often their main reason for interacting with

Timeline

A year in the life of
the Inca people

Camay

January

A month of penitence and fasting.

Jatunpucuy

February

A time of sacrifices, with huge amounts of gold and silver offered to the gods.

Pachapucuy

March

A particularly wet month in which animals were sacrificed.

Arihuaquis

April

Maize and potatoes reach maturity.

Jatuncusqui

May

Harvest month.

Aucaycusqui

June

A feast is held in honour of the Sun god Inti Raymi, coinciding with the winter solstice.

Chaguahuarquis

July

Land distributions are made and the soil is prepared for planting.

Yapaquis

August

Crops are planted.

Coyarraimi

September

A feast is held to honour the current coya (queen) and expel evil spirits and disease.

Humarraimi

October

This month saw regular invocations for rainfall.

Ayamarca

November

Time to worship the dead.

Llamas were bred by the Inca for meat and transport

each other. Many intricate ceremonies would be celebrated from sunrise until sunset. The main festival was the annual celebration of the Sun, where thanks would be given for the year's crops and prayers and sacrifices offered for a better year to come. The sacrifice would be a llama, its lungs removed and used to predict the future. It was such a significant celebration that the mummies of distinguished dead people were brought out to observe the ceremonies.

Around the Inca capital of Cusco there were many sacred fields. Harvest from these fields was offered up to the heavens in the hope of divine blessings. One field was reserved for the ceremonial planting of the year's first maize crops. In August, the king would ceremoniously till the soil with a gold plough. In order to win favour from the gods, chicha - a fermented beer-like drink prepared by chewing maize and leaving the pulp to ferment - would be poured onto the ground near springs and rivers, and animals such as guinea pigs and llamas would be slaughtered.

When it came to storing food, the Inca pioneered a method still used today: freeze-drying. Built on hillsides in the cool, the Inca used rectangular or circular storage buildings known as qollqa. These simple, single-room stone buildings were erected in the thousands across the empire and according to recent archaeological finds were aligned in neat rows and monitored by officials of the state. A dry masonry method was used to construct the buildings using stones that fit so perfectly together that nothing could slip between them. This method proved to be extremely resistant to earthquakes. This was also due to the absence of stress concentration points. The buildings had a fantastic seismic resistance, and it was this that kept them stable.

In order to keep the contents as dry as possible, it was vital to ensure the storage buildings were kept cool. Ventilation in the roof and floor, drainage canals and gravel flooring all helped to reduce the temperature within.

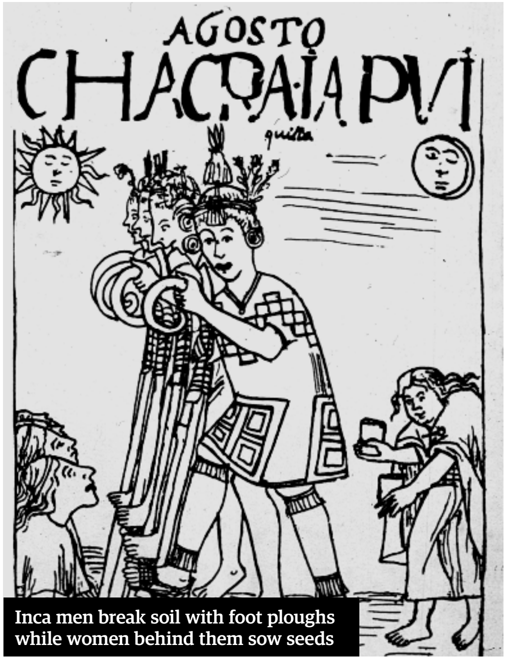
The Inca were pioneers of freeze-drying foods, particularly potatoes and other tubers. They achieved this by laying small potatoes on beds of straw and covering them overnight with cloth. During the night they would freeze, ready to be dried the following day by the Sun. The liquids and skins were removed by stomping on the tubers with bare feet. Once dried, chuño - a freeze-dried

Pacays and cactus pears were just some of the fruits cultivated

Potatoes drying in the Sun. The humble potato was revered by the Inca

Roasted guinea pig was a popular source of meat for the Inca

Corn and maize crops growing in a valley in the Andes Mountains



Inca men break soil with foot ploughs while women behind them sow seeds

potato - could last for many years and was a lifeline during poor harvests and for feeding travelling armies. It is still eaten today in many parts of South America, often spiced with ají, an Andean chilli.

The humble potato was revered by the Inca, so much so that they often buried them with their dead. They were the first to cultivate this treasured vegetable almost 7,000 years ago. In fact, such is their bond with them that the word 'potato' is derived from the Quechua word 'papa' and the Taíno word 'batata'. During the Spanish conquest of Peru in 1534, the conquistadors found these potatoes while in search of other treasures. They took them back on their ships, and they proved highly effective in preventing scurvy.

The Inca only ate two meals per day. One early in the morning, the other late in the evening. They took these on the ground without a table. Their diet was mainly vegetarian, as meat and seafood was valuable and therefore saved for special occasions, or when it was available. When meat was consumed it was usually in the form of wild game such as deer, duck, viscacha, a rodent native to South America, llama, alpaca or guinea pig. Ch'arki made from camelid meat was also a popular option as it could be salted and freeze-dried and was easy to transport when travelling. On the coast, Inca fishermen piloting small boats made of reeds would fish for salmon, tuna, sea bass, shellfish, anchovies and sardines. Any fish caught were often made into a nourishing stew.

Grains were another popular food staple, with quinoa, cañihua, maca and oca ground using a stone pestle and mortar. Much of the food was prepared on wood or llama-dung fires or on clay and stone stoves. Most food was roasted or boiled, with flavour added using chili peppers and other spices and herbs. A special treat for the Inca was popcorn, although theirs was a little bit more basic than the type we enjoy today.

The Inca diet would today be considered incredibly healthy. Known for their strength, endurance and fighting skills, the Inca were fuelled by a diet of nutritionally dense superfoods. Maybe it's time to give the Inca diet a go - perhaps with the exception of the grilled guinea pig.

Inca superfoods

The Inca enjoyed a varied and healthy diet

The land that came under the control of the Inca Empire comprised four climate zones. As a result, the Inca were able to cultivate many different crops. Some of these included avocado, sweet potatoes, cacao, cashews, carob beans, cherimoya and squash. Much of what we now consider to be a superfood was eaten by the Inca.

Mashua, a tuberous, shiny, cone-shaped crop native to the Andes, was a valuable source of food that also had medicinal properties. According to a Spanish writer by the name of Cobo, Inca emperors fed it to their armies in order to "make them forget their wives" while on campaign.

Another great superfood eaten by the Inca was cañihua. Similar to quinoa and native to the Andes, there are over 200 varieties, and it has been farmed in the area for millennia. Another favourite is lucuma, harvested from the *Pouteria lucuma* tree. Its fruit, the lucuma, has a hard, green outer shell and a soft, bright-yellow flesh. Often likened to a mix of butterscotch and sweet potato, it's full of beta-Carotene, zinc, calcium, protein, iron and vitamin B3. It promotes good cardiovascular health and is known to be an anti-aging food. Nowadays it is immensely popular as a flavour in ice creams and sweets.

A lucuma tree bristling with fruit

© Alamy, Getty Images, Wiki: Forest & Kim Starr

A doomed dynasty

Civil war, disease, invasion: all three would play a crucial role in the destruction of the Inca Empire

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Determined to enhance his realm, Yupanqui conquered rival peoples and ventured out into the Pacific Ocean

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Hailed as the 'Mighty One', Huayna extended the Inca Empire to its greatest extent

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Step inside the ruins of Sacsayhuamán, the mightiest of all the Inca's defensive strongholds

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Huayna Cápac's inability to name his heir condemned his empire to five years of savagery as his sons fought for ultimate power

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Long gone but never forgotten, explore the legacy of the Inca Empire

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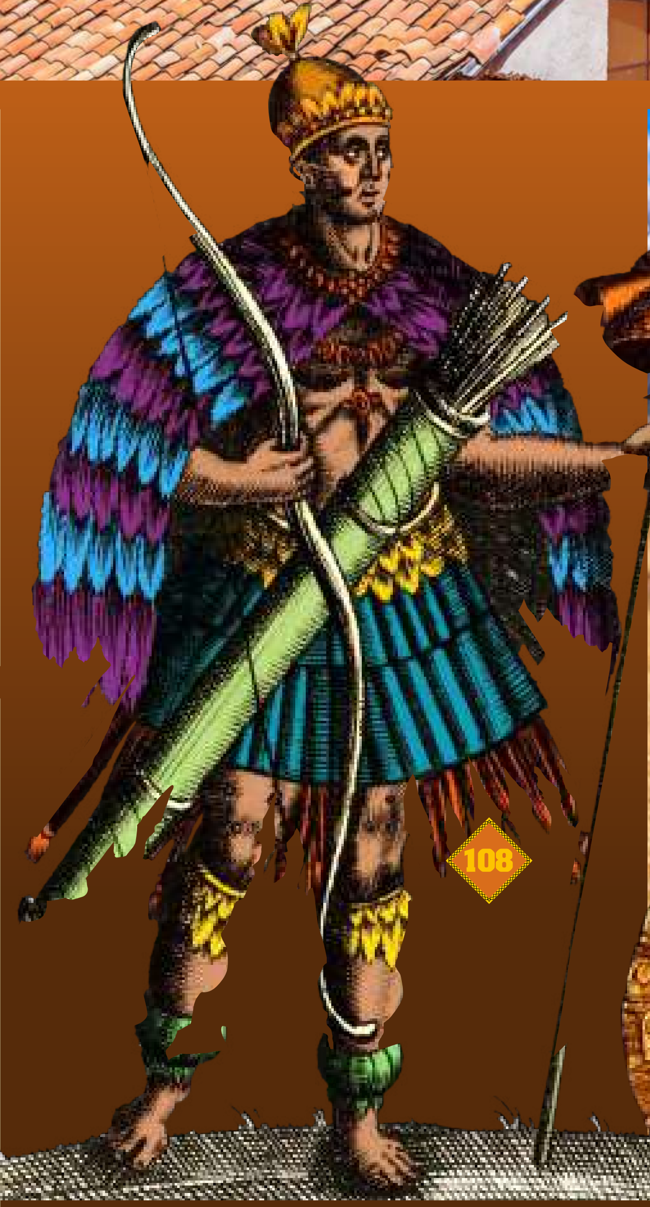
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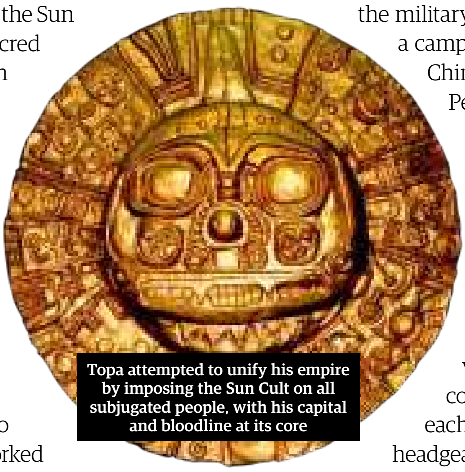
Topa Inca Yupanqui

Standing on the shoulders of the greatest Inca conqueror, the 'Inca Alexander' took things a step further

Written by Hareth Al Bustani

In the mid-15th century, at the height of his powers, the mighty emperor Pachacuti returned to Cusco to discover his wife-sister had bore him a new son. Although he had older legitimate sons, he sensed something special in this boy. As he raised him towards the almighty Sun, he proclaimed the boy Topa Inca Yupanqui. It was an auspicious occasion, one the emperor marked by offering vast quantities of gold and silver to the Sun god Inti, the oracles and the sacred stones known as the huacas. In the most extravagant festival the Inca had ever seen, he undertook an epic capac hucha ceremony, where a procession of children toured Cusco before being sacrificed.

Years later, as the elderly emperor felt his vigour fade, he decided it was time to step back from the action and appoint one of his sons to co-rule the empire he had worked so tirelessly to forge. When Pachacuti named his eldest legitimate son, Amaru, heir, although the priests were happy, the generals were not. They felt that Amaru was not up to the task of leading the greatest army beneath the Sun. After much consideration, Pachacuti summoned the nobles and elites, declaring that Amaru did not have "the qualifications to govern so great a lordship as that which I have acquired". Instead the emperor turned to his youngest son, Topa, elevating him to co-ruler.



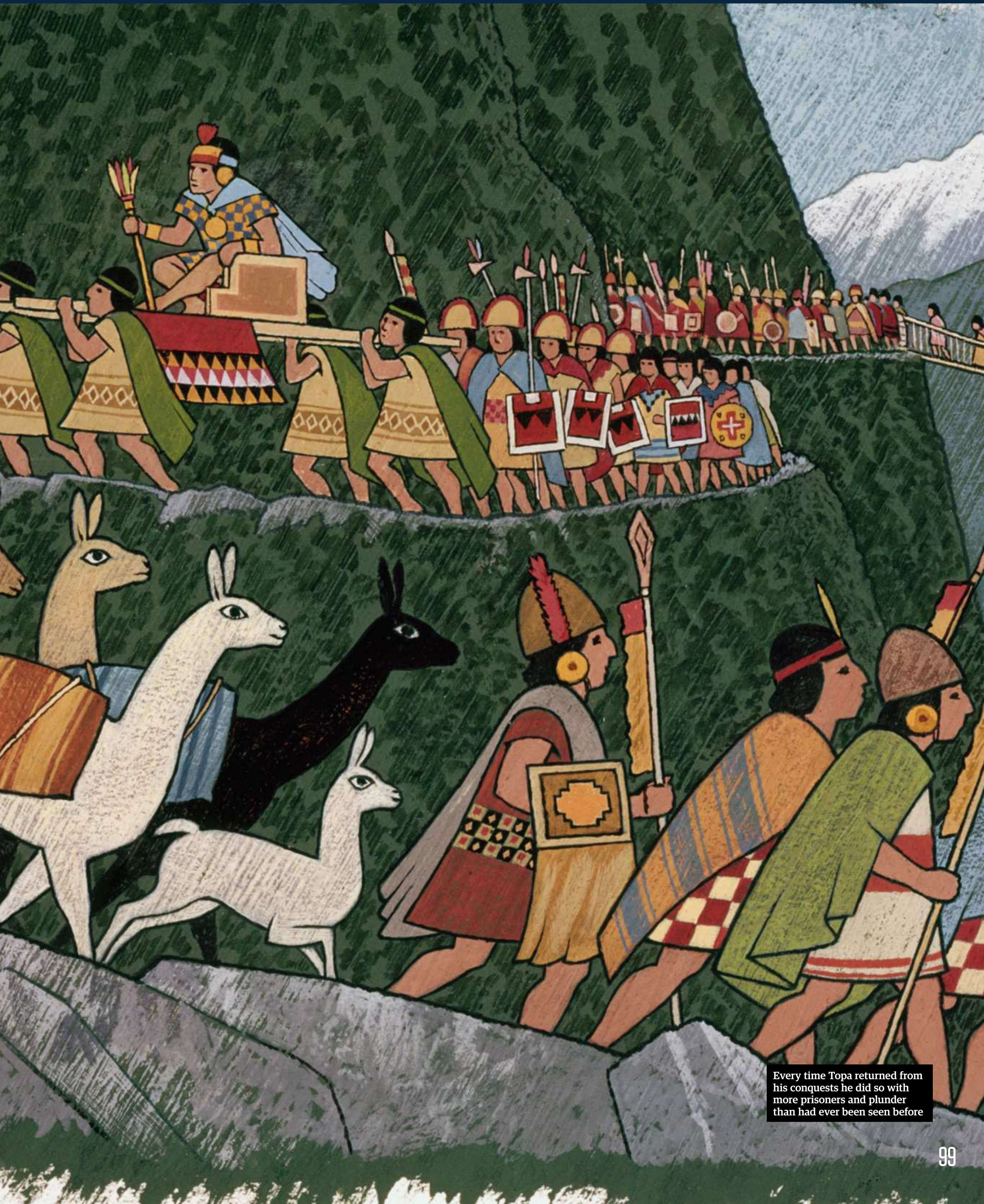
Topa attempted to unify his empire by imposing the Sun Cult on all subjugated people, with his capital and bloodline at its core

It was a momentous occasion. Once again, children were sacrificed to the Sun in order that it may shine down upon Topa Inca Yupanqui - son of the Sun and father of his people. As Topa sat upon a golden throne, with a fringe of gold atop his head, he was handed the feathered pike and royal insignia. Afterwards, the priests hoisted him away on their shoulders to the House of the Sun - where he received the order of chivalry as well as his sister Mama Ocllo's hand in marriage.

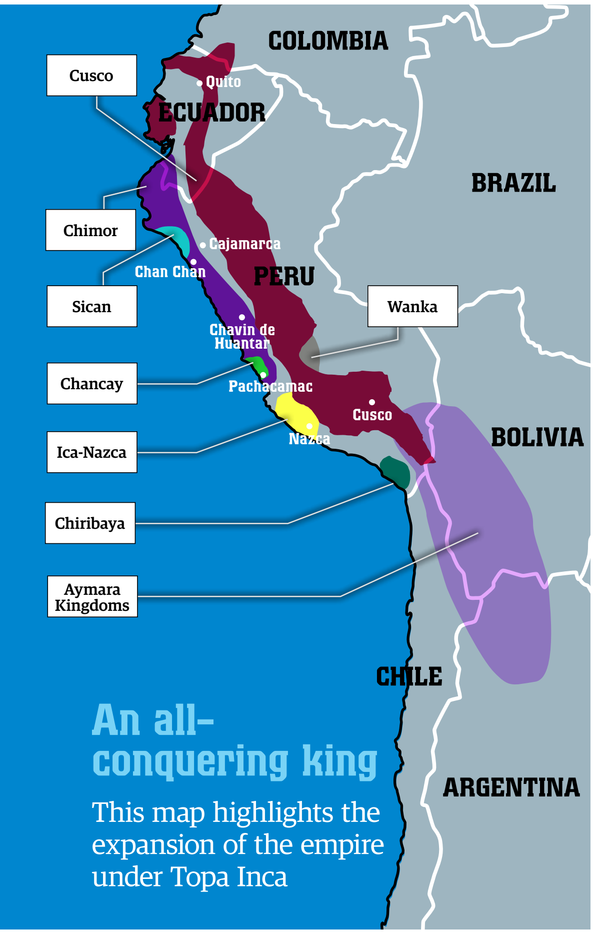
Eager to prove Topa's martial worth to the military, Pachacuti sent him on a campaign to the province of Chinchasuyu in northern Peru, which was rumoured to hold enormous hordes of treasure. As Topa set off with his brothers and generals, citizens lined the road, plucking their eyelashes and blowing on them for good luck.

Passing through the villages his father had conquered, Topa donned each one's distinct dress and headgear and burned animals in sacrifice. Proving his father's trust well placed, as he marched north through the Andes Topa stormed the hostile province of the Quechua, taking fortress after fortress. Any who dared to resist him were impaled on wooden lances, their heads crushed by spiked clubs, or picked off by crafty slingers and their chiefs taken captive. Topa's merciless war machine tore its way through Cajamarca, pressing as far north as Quito in Ecuador.

Content, Topa finally decided to turn back, but instead of heading straight for Cusco, he travelled down the Ecuadorian coast to the mighty Kingdom of Chimor, seizing control of the Moche River, a

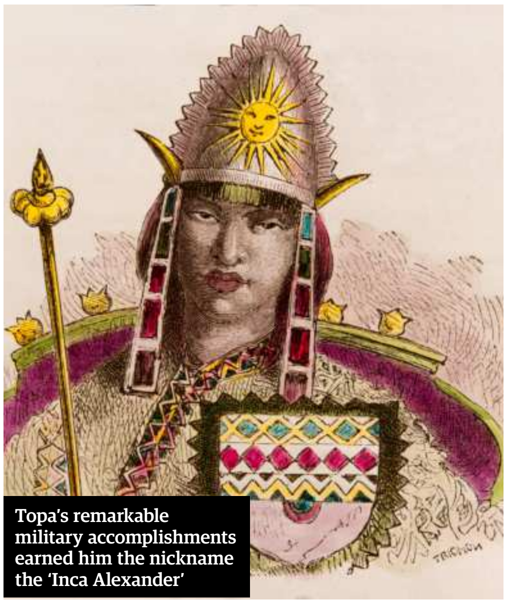


Every time Topa returned from his conquests he did so with more prisoners and plunder than had ever been seen before



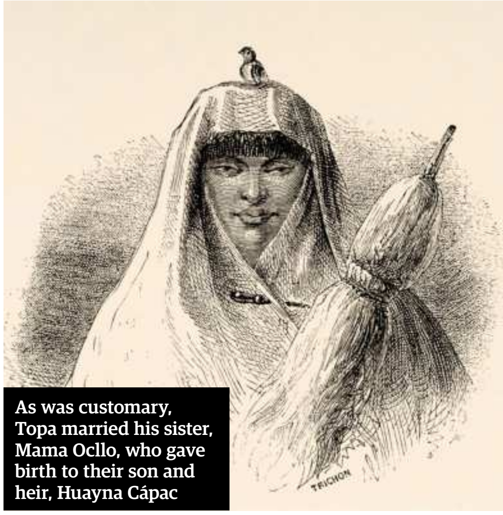
An all-conquering king

This map highlights the expansion of the empire under Topa Inca

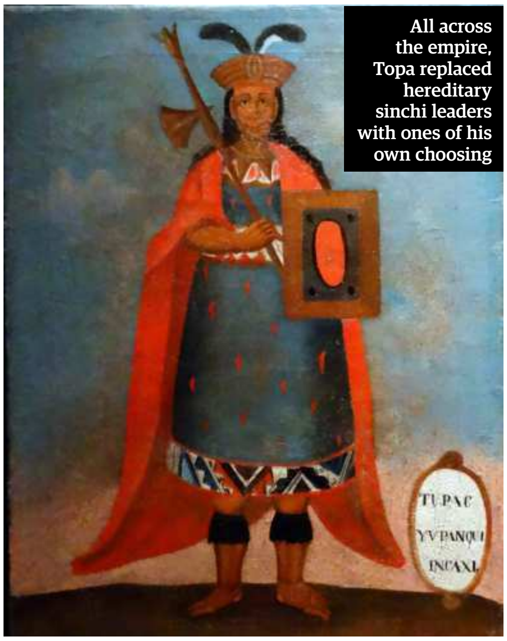


Topa's remarkable military accomplishments earned him the nickname the 'Inca Alexander'

> "He led his men to victory in the mountains, on the shore and even at sea"



As was customary, Topa married his sister, Mama Ocllo, who gave birth to their son and heir, Huayna Cápac



All across the empire, Topa replaced hereditary sinchi leaders with ones of his own choosing

vital lifeline. His army laid waste to the Chimor capital, taking its lord captive and replacing him with one of his own choosing, before doing the same to northern Peru's 'Warriors of the Clouds', the Chachapoya. When Topa returned home he was followed by a caravan of plunder and prisoners the likes of which had never been seen before. His father proud and his nobles in awe, Topa enjoyed a particularly memorable Festival of the Sun, book-ended by a hysteric flurry of feasts, sacrifices and dancing.

However, suspecting there was yet more glory and riches to be gained, Pachacuti sent his son out once again - this time with his brothers Tilca and Anqui - to conquer Quito. When Topa's army reached Tumipampa he faced the combined might of Quito and the Cañari - proud people who refused to live beneath the Inca yoke. To the Inca's surprise, the battle went down to the wire, and Topa only won by leaping from his litter and personally leading his reserves into the fray. As the defeated enemy fled, the Inca chased and hacked them down, roaring, "Cusco, Cusco!"

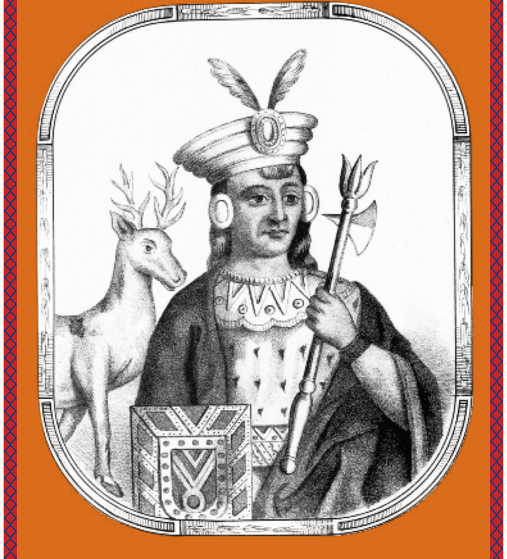
The Pacific expedition

Always on the hunt for glory and plunder, Topa Inca spent so long raiding the Pacific he was presumed dead

As he stormed his way down the Ecuadorian coast of Manta to the island of La Puná, Topa ran into some maritime merchants. They told him of two islands called Avachumbi and Ninchumbi - 'Outer Belt' and 'Fire Belt' - overflowing with people and riches - most likely two of the Galápagos Islands.

Excited but unconvinced by their gossip, Topa asked his diviner - a man thought to be capable of flight - to confirm if it was true, or if the tale was simply typical maritime merchant 'talk'. After hearing confirmation of the story, the emperor had his men build a fleet of balsa rafts and departed with an army of 20,000.

He was gone so long - nine months - that many believed he had died. The chronicler Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa claims that Topa's brother Apu, who was in charge of the army left behind, became so worried that he began to celebrate in order to make the men think Topa would be back soon. When Topa did finally return he did so with some magnificent trophies - a brass chair and the skin and jawbone of a horse. However, his brother's earlier charade was misinterpreted as a celebration of the emperor's demise and he was put to death.



Whenever there was treasure to be taken, Topa simply could not help himself

Afterwards, Topa appointed a governor and brought in huge numbers of mitmaq - migrants forcefully relocated for the purpose of work - to rebuild the city of Quito. After a brief respite, the emperor pressed on to Tumipampa, where his sister-wife bore him a son who would later be known as Huayna Cápac. Despite having been away from his capital for years, the insatiable Topa was not ready to return home. Instead, he split his army into three and embarked on a campaign against the

Huancavelica on the Ecuadorian coast. He led his men to victory in the mountains, on the shore and even at sea with the aid of local raftsmen.

When Topa returned to Cusco with even more plunder, foreign people and unusual beasts than last time, he once again received a hero's welcome. Curiously, this time rather than being proud, Pachacuti became envious of his son's achievements. In a rage he had his son Tilca killed for taking too long to bring Topa home safely. The elderly conqueror himself died soon after in 1471, leaving Topa the empire's sole authority.

Eager to once again make a powerful statement, Topa cast his attention to the jungles of Anti – a land steeped in coca plantations that had recently risen up in rebellion. Once again he split his army in three and led them deep into the jungle. However, the Inca, accustomed to cool and dry weather, found the heat and humidity intolerable. Wandering aimlessly through the thicket, Topa found his way by sending men up trees to look for smoke, building roads as they went along. Despite the challenging terrain they conquered four formidable tribes.

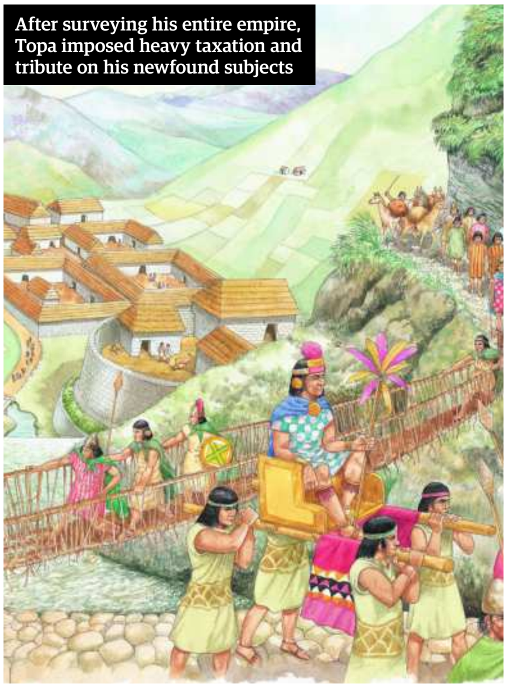
Amid the chaos, one of the Callao people in Topa's ranks fled to the Callao highlands and spread rumours that the emperor had died. Audaciously renaming himself Pachacuti, the man convinced the rebellious-minded people to rise up in revolt, with him as their leader. His blood hot with fury and conquest, Topa rushed to Callao, leaving behind a general to finish conquering the jungle. Smashing his way through four great settlements, he quickly decimated the Callao, capturing their leaders, skinning them and turning their hides into drums. Topa's wrath carried him as far south as Chile, where he captured two chiefs before setting up frontier columns at the Maule River – marking the southern boundaries of his empire.

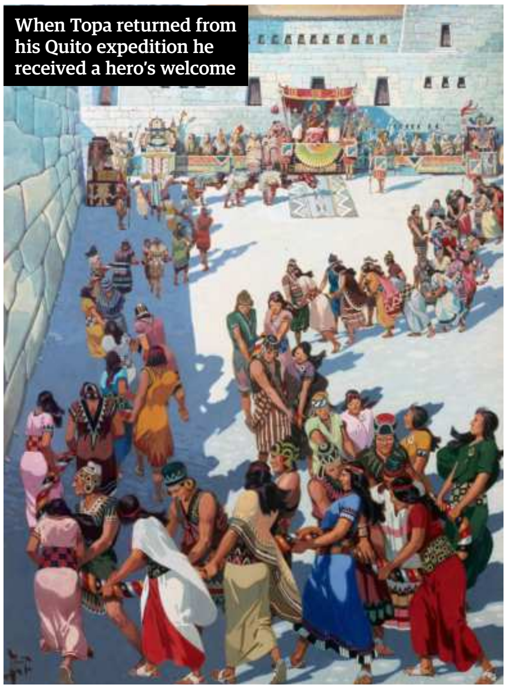
The campaign marked the pinnacle of Inca conquest, and as the army returned home Topa generously rewarded them for their service. After years of war, Topa oversaw a general visitation of all the land from the Ecuadorian Quito boundary in the north to Chile in the south, registering the whole population and imposing fixed tribute upon all. Ruling over an enormous empire spanning many tribes and cultures, he was determined to instil authority and uniformity across his realm. Along the way people were dragged from caves, hills and riverbanks to settle villages, build fortresses and till the land. Members of each ayllu, or community, spent three months a year working their own land and the rest of the year harvesting land owned by the gods and the emperor himself.

Eager to establish a more unified realm, Topa imposed the Sun cult upon all those beneath his yoke. They had to accept that Cusco was not only the heart of the empire but the universe itself – and the emperor was a direct descendant of the almighty Sun God. He also replaced their hereditary sinchi lords with a new type of ruler, the kuraka, each responsible for increasingly large groups of taxpayers, rising from 100 to 10,000. Although children of kuraka would inherit their class, which entitled them to women, servants and estates, they did not inherit positions; that was for the emperor alone to decide.

When it came to hard power, the emperor built fortresses along the borders of his recent conquests. Chief of all was the almighty stronghold of Sacsayhuamán, built high atop the plateau north of Cusco. His father had always described Cusco as a lion without a head. The tail was where the two rivers united to flow through it and the body was the great square. Now, in Sacsayhuamán, it had its head. A masterpiece of engineering, the fortress was built in a matter of years, utilising an enormous workforce and remarkable organisation. Inside, it was filled with worked stone buildings, with plenty of store houses to hold emergency provisions in times of war.

Shortly after overseeing the construction of the imperial gardens in Chinchero, the emperor fell ill. His downturn was so sudden some suspected foul play. Although he initially named the son of one of his minor wives, Cápac Huari, as his successor, he later changed his mind, nominating Huayna Cápac, the son borne by his sister-wife. After Topa died in 1493, as Cápac Huari's mother and allies complained that he was the rightful successor, Huayna's uncle acted quickly, banishing Cápac while butchering his allies and mother. Subsequent military excursions largely consisted of visiting annexed zones to consolidate power or put down distant revolts. None would ever again achieve the heights of Topa, the Inca 'Alexander the Great'.


After surveying his entire empire, Topa imposed heavy taxation and tribute on his newfound subjects


When Topa returned from his Quito expedition he received a hero's welcome

The mighty stone fortress of Sacsayhuamán, north of Cusco, was built without mortar in just a few years

© Alamy, Getty Images

Huayna Cápac

How the Inca emperor took the empire to the peak of its strength

Written by Steve Wright

Invariably, when talking about long-lost civilisations it can be difficult to ascertain the most basic information about even the most significant figures. Take Huayna Cápac, the 11th Inca emperor, sixth of the Hanan dynasty, and third Sapa Inca, alternatively known by assorted variations of 'The Mighty One'. We aren't even sure of his date of birth – suggestions range from 1468 to 1488. What we can be sure of is the fact that he presided over the Inca Empire when it was at its peak in terms of size.

Born under the name Inti Cusi Guallpa, he was the child of Mama Ocllo and his predecessor, Topa Inca (a brother-sister union). His birthright as a future ruler was confirmed at a young age when he travelled with his parents to the city of Cusco, where his grandfather, Pachacuti, adorned him with a fringed headdress and gave him the moniker 'Huayna Cápac', the first part of the name referring to his youth and the latter indicating the legacy to which he was heir.

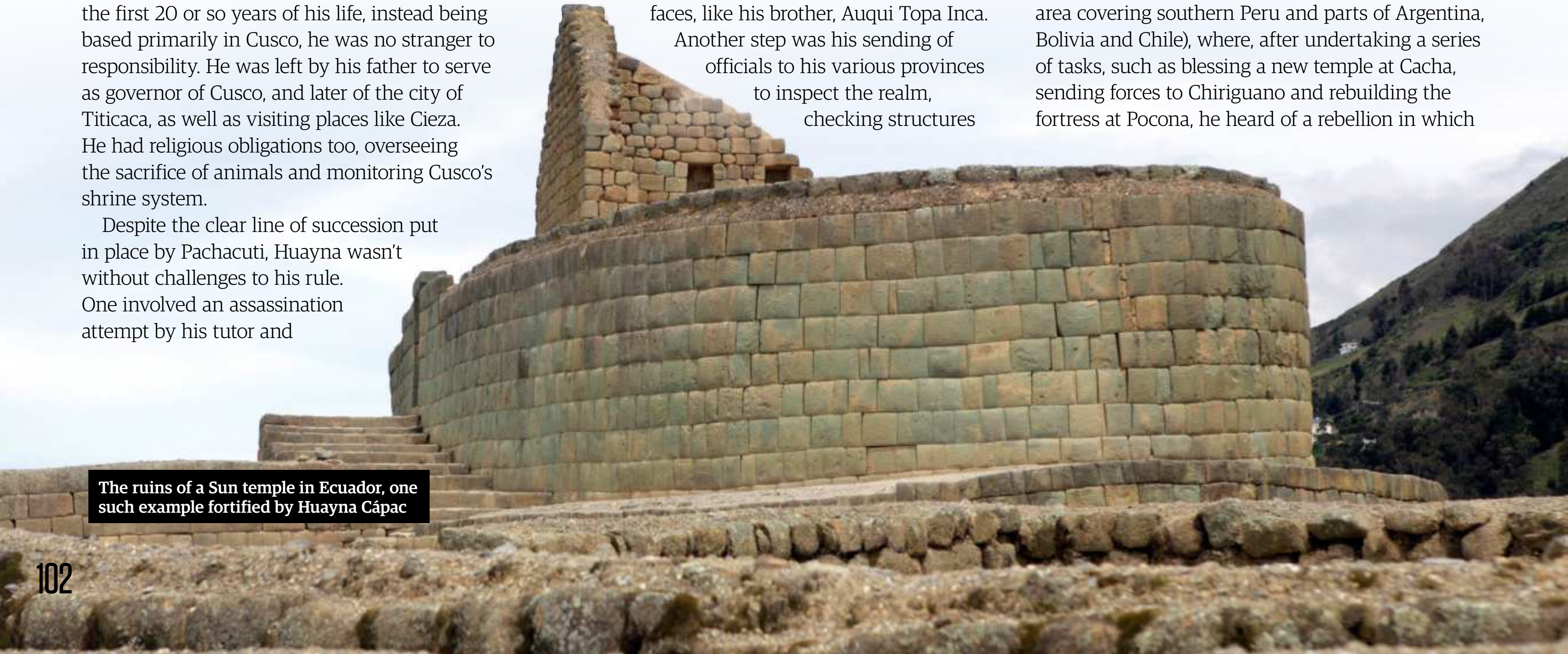
While he spent little time near the battlefield for the first 20 or so years of his life, instead being based primarily in Cusco, he was no stranger to responsibility. He was left by his father to serve as governor of Cusco, and later of the city of Titicaca, as well as visiting places like Cieza. He had religious obligations too, overseeing the sacrifice of animals and monitoring Cusco's shrine system.

Despite the clear line of succession put in place by Pachacuti, Huayna wasn't without challenges to his rule. One involved an assassination attempt by his tutor and governor, Hualpaya, who planned to invite Huayna to a party at his palace, where he would be surrounded and killed with smuggled weapons. This plan was discovered by another of his advisors, Achachi, and the conspirators were put to death. Another case posits that Huayna's father, Topa Inca, was killed by a disgruntled concubine who wanted to put her own son on the Inca throne, although it's unclear as to whether or not this actually did happen.

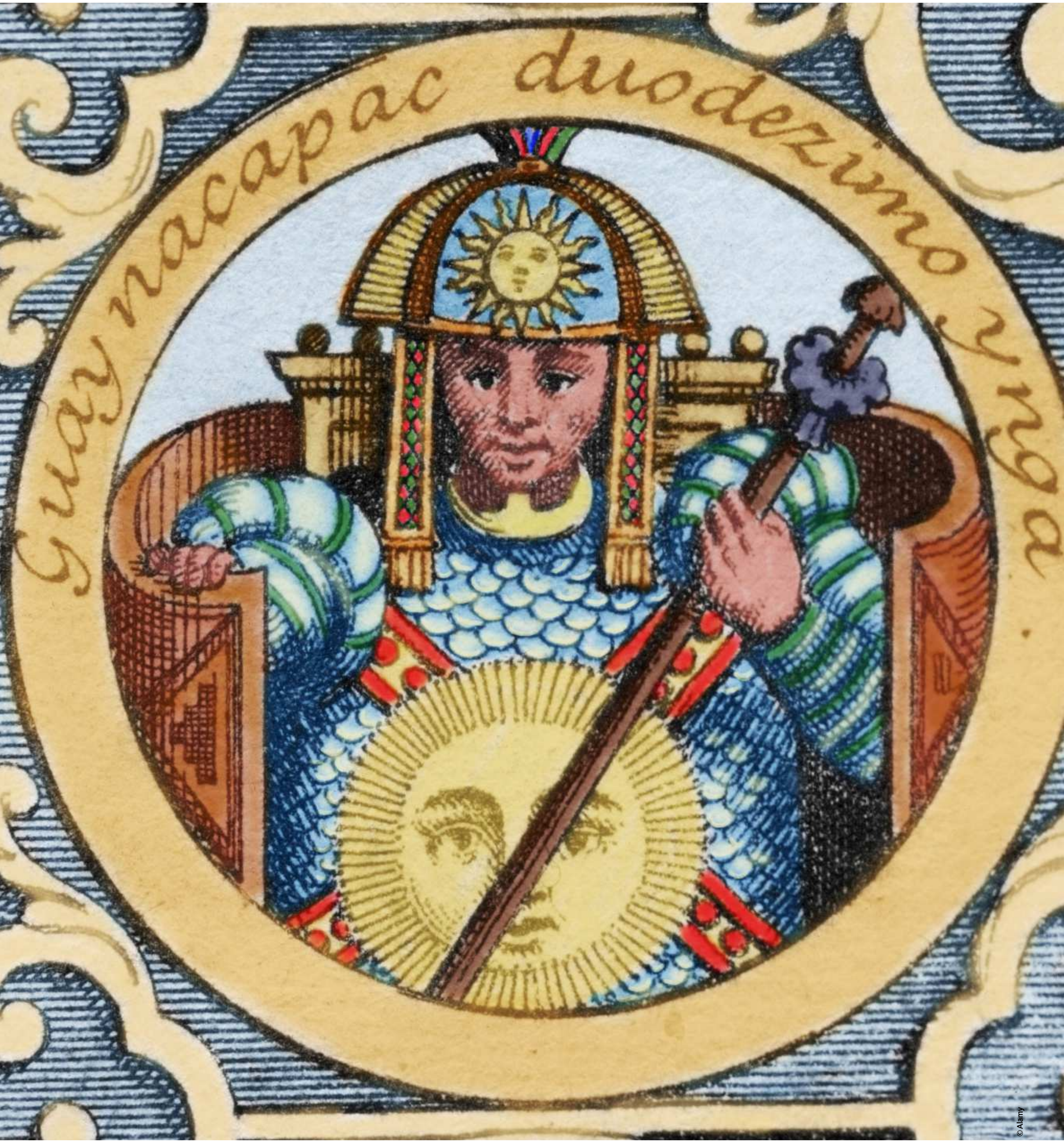
Regardless of this particular event's veracity, and of his own relative lack of hands-on military experience, by this point Huayna was no stranger to the machinations of power and what it took to rule. Upon the death of his father and his official succession, he consolidated his power by removing the old advisors and replacing them with trusted faces, like his brother, Auqui Topa Inca. Another step was his sending of officials to his various provinces to inspect the realm, checking structures like buildings, bridges and canals and ordering repairs and fortifications where necessary. Irrigation systems were also improved, and in some cases governors were replaced with his preferred choices. Moreover, Huayna added lands to the estates of ancestors who he particularly valued or admired.

> "The plan to kill Huayna was discovered and the conspirators put to death"

Such was Huayna's close relationship to his mother that he honoured his promise to her not to go to war until after she died. When this happened, however, he did so with a vengeance, setting off with 100,000 men while still in mourning. The object of his wrath was the Chachapoya in modern-day Peru, who had purportedly sympathised with one or more of the attempted uprisings against Huayna. They paid for their scheming, crushed beneath Huayna's rampant army. He then turned his attention to the Collasuyu province (today the area covering southern Peru and parts of Argentina, Bolivia and Chile), where, after undertaking a series of tasks, such as blessing a new temple at Cacha, sending forces to Chiriguano and rebuilding the fortress at Pocona, he heard of a rebellion in which



The ruins of a Sun temple in Ecuador, one such example fortified by Huayna Cápac


Guaynacapac duodezimo ynga.

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Inca governors had been killed. Having declared war, he travelled to Cusco to gather his troops and set off towards the Inca Empire's northern boundaries (situated in the modern-day countries of Ecuador and Colombia).

The land where much of Ecuador lay - then known as the Kingdom of Quito - would be the location of a conflict lasting 12 years (encompassing the remainder of Huayna's life), but it would help provide the basis for his legacy and crowning achievements. Along the way, he ordered the construction of numerous storehouses for food, primarily to support his 200,000-strong force but also as a means of quickly rushing food to civilians in times of famine. Road networks were also greatly improved and structures like temples and fortresses added to his existing lands, enhancing regional security and reassuring locals.

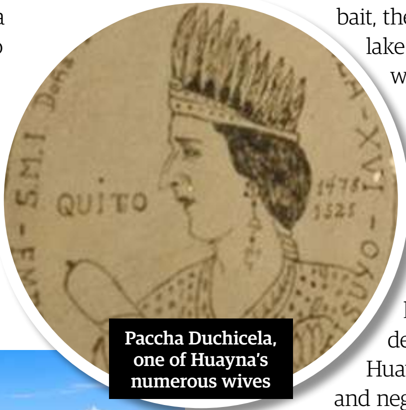
The march to the north was long, with Huayna taking the opportunity along the way to resolve other issues, such as settling border disputes near the Inca administrative centre of Xauxa and later successfully facing off against some old Inca enemies, the Guancachupacho and Chachapoya.

Upon reaching the north, Huayna based his forces at the city of Tumipampa (today's Cuenca, Ecuador). Having first fended off an assault from armies of the Pasto, he subsequently invaded their territories, destroying their towns and killing any survivors. Next he headed down towards the coast at Tumbes, where the Caranqui was based. Having pursued them to a hilltop fortress and attempting to lay siege, disaster almost struck when Huayna was nearly killed in a counter attack. Having survived, the attack was repelled, and the Caranqui were forced to retreat back to their fortress.

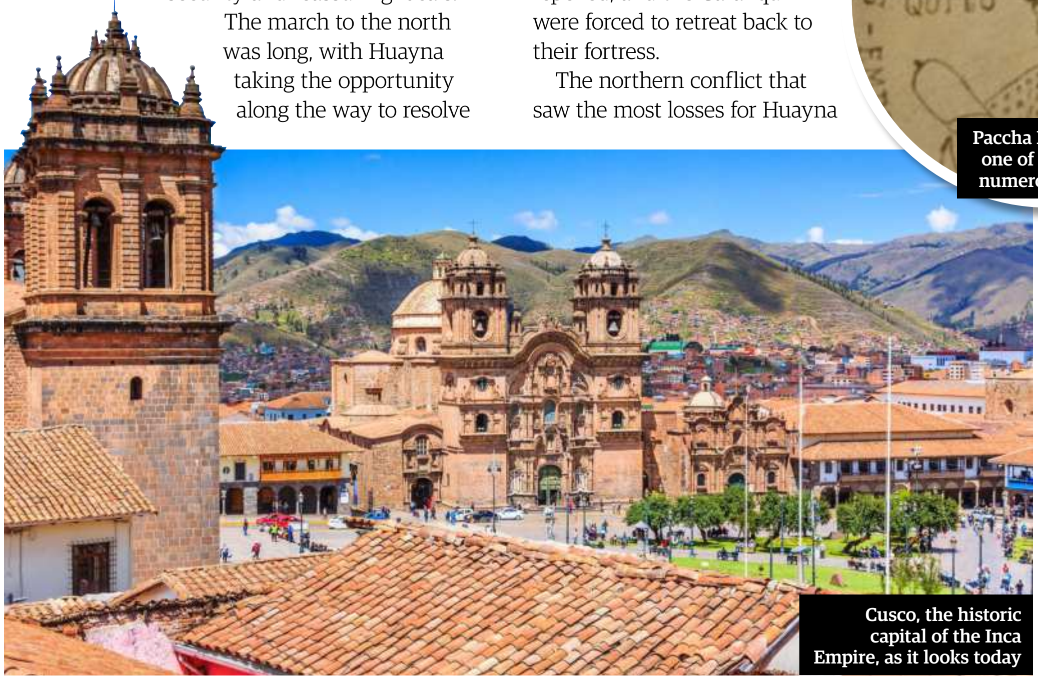
The northern conflict that saw the most losses for Huayna was against the Cayambi, who in this case struck first, killing so many Inca that Huayna's army was forced to retreat. In the counter attack the fighting was especially fierce, with an account from *The Shape of Inca History* by Susan A. Niles saying that "both sides fought so valiantly that there was no place to stand except on top of other bodies". When this attack also failed, Huayna launched another one, this time dividing his forces into three sections before feigning another retreat to lure the Cayambi out. Having taken the bait, they were pursued to a nearby lake and slaughtered. The water was subsequently named Yahuarcocha (Blood Lake). One Cayambi captain, Pinto, was killed upon capture, his skin used by Huayna as a drumhead for a Sun dance.

Despite the victory all was not well. Angry at what he viewed as his being left for dead during the Caranqui battle, Huayna cut his soldiers' rations and neglected to invite his generals to the victory feasts, prompting many to march back to Cusco. He later enticed them back by sending a statue of his mother to meet them on the road, offering a public apology and providing them with the main things that they wanted: food and women.

Other much more abbreviated accounts exist of smaller accomplishments, such as conquests of coastal locations like Murua and Cabello, as well as the further construction of temples and settling of minor disputes. It was also around this time that Huayna married the Quito queen Paccha Duchicela in order to unify the Inca and Quito territories and stave off war. Their marriage produced a son, Atahualpa, who was intended to eventually rule Quito. By this point, Huayna had already married

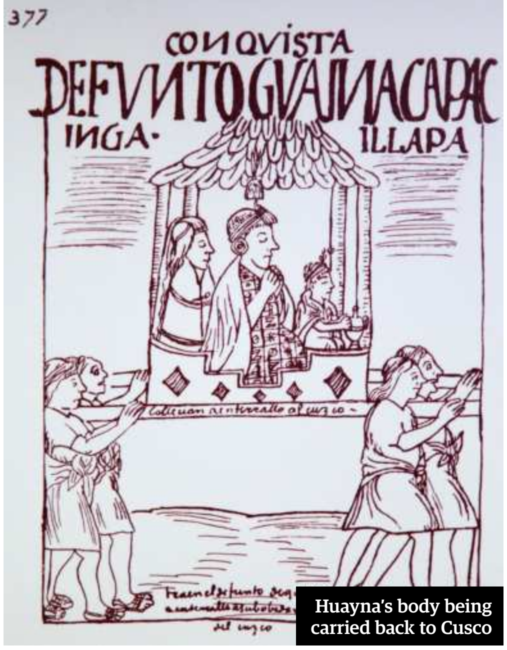


Paccha Duchicela, one of Huayna's numerous wives

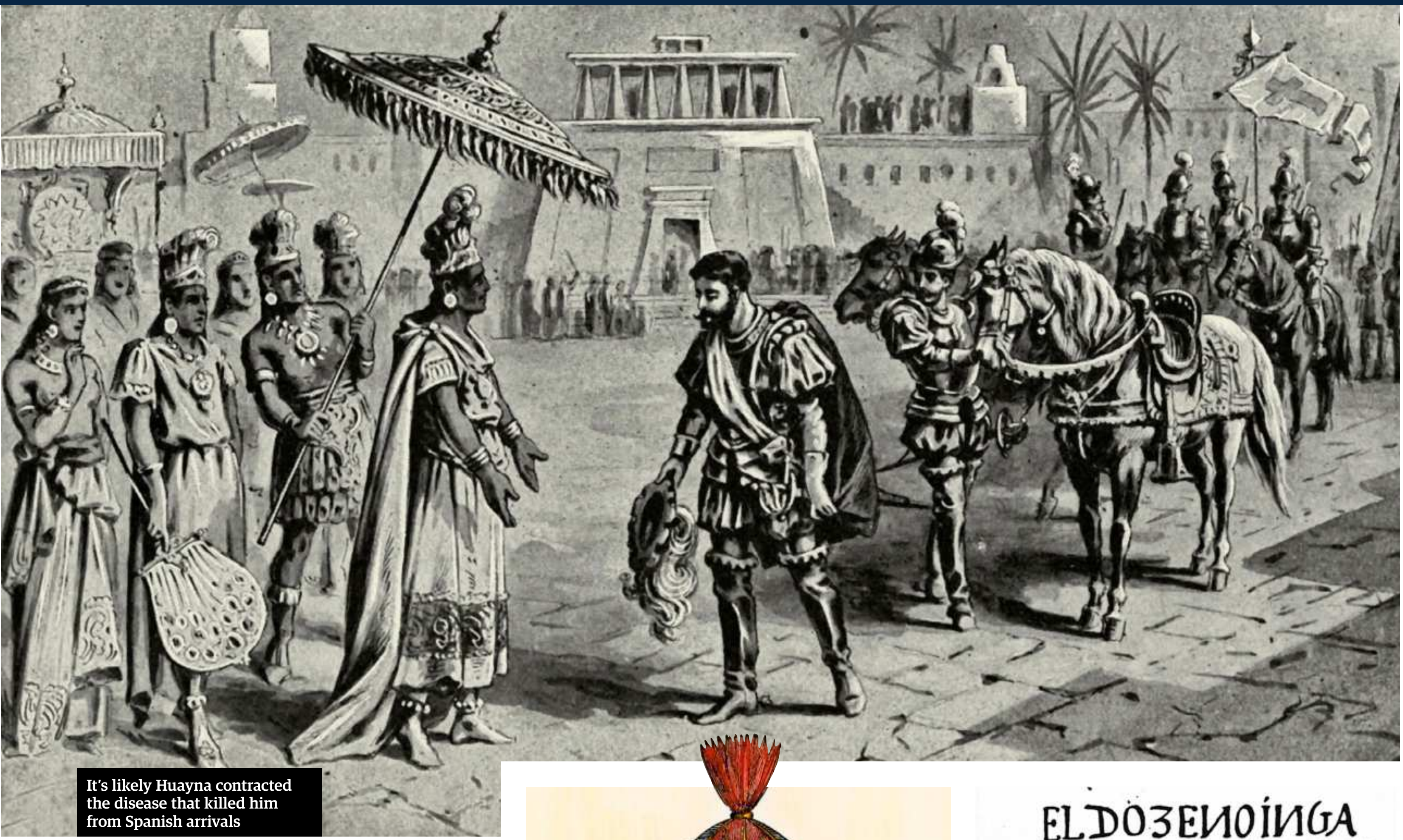


Cusco, the historic capital of the Inca Empire, as it looks today

Ruins of Ingapirca in southern Ecuador, another area fortified by Huayna



Huayna's body being carried back to Cusco



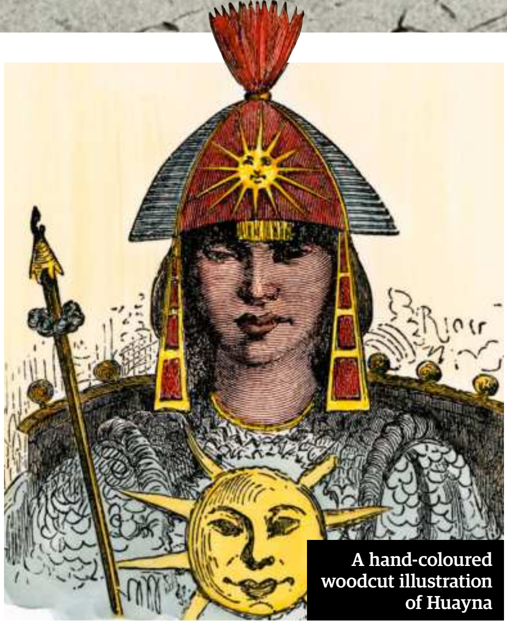
It's likely Huayna contracted the disease that killed him from Spanish arrivals

> "One Cayambi captain was killed, his skin used by Huayna as a drumhead"

two of his sisters, Kusi Rimay (who died early in his reign), and Rahua Ocllo, with who he sired Huáscar. His matrimonial activities were by no means limited; in all he is estimated to have had around 50 wives, producing over 200 children in the process.

Ultimately, Huayna's conquest was halted by disease. With explorers from Europe having already made contact at this point, they brought with them illnesses that the people of the continent were ill equipped to cope with. While residing in Quito around 1524, one such disease - most likely smallpox - swept through the city, killing a number of the emperor's generals and infecting Huayna himself. Laid low and close to death, Huáscar is believed to have finally been named as his successor. Upon his death, Huayna was carried back in procession to Cusco, where he was buried along with as many as 1,000 of his loyal servants.

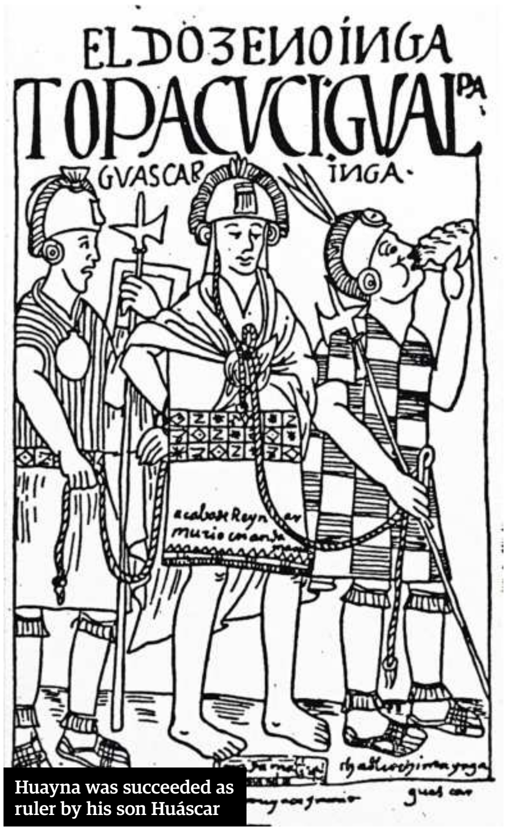
While Huayna's vacillating over his heir ultimately sparked a savaged civil war between Huáscar and Atahualpa that would help to accelerate the empire's collapse, his legacy is beyond question, an astute ruler who presided over the Inca Empire when it was at the height of its strength, with its boundaries extending from Chile and Argentina all the way through Peru and Bolivia up towards Ecuador, spanning 3,500 kilometres from north to south.



A hand-coloured woodcut illustration of Huayna

While the bulk of the conquering and military activities were undertaken by his ancestors, he played a significant role in providing order to the Inca Empire, enhancing travel routes, fortifying his cities, creating food supplies and improving vital infrastructure. Cities and temples carved through granite mountains represented incredible feats of engineering for the time and stood as tributes to his achievements.

While his death would ultimately lead to the downward spiral of the Inca Empire, this shouldn't detract from Huayna's achievements in galvanising and organising such a large expanse of territory and enabling it to run in an orderly fashion. Certain figures become indelibly linked with their empires, like Caesar to the Romans' and Genghis Khan to the Mongols'. So too is Huayna Cápac at one with the Inca Empire.



Huayna was succeeded as ruler by his son Huáscar

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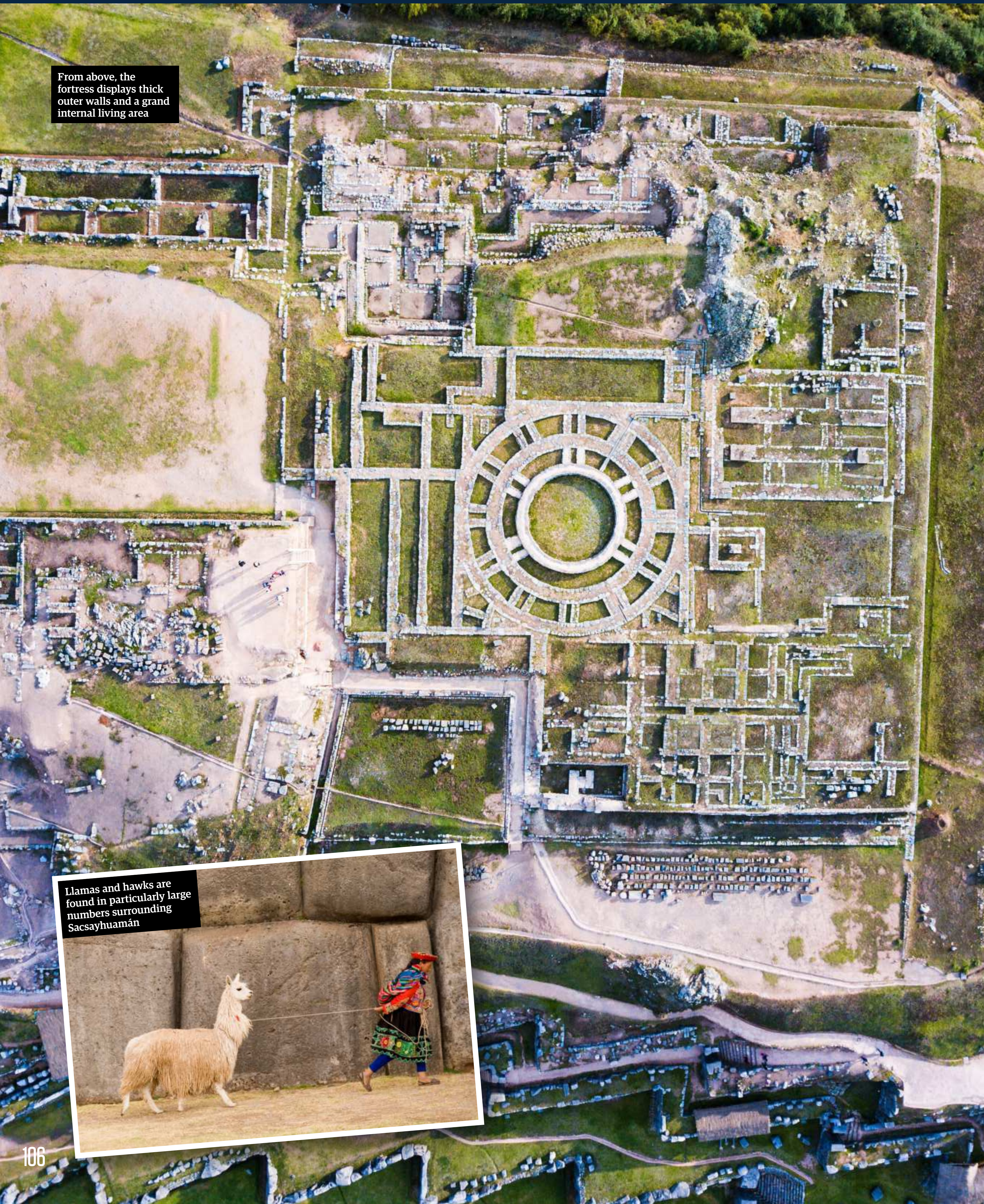


From above, the fortress displays thick outer walls and a grand internal living area

Llamas and hawks are found in particularly large numbers surrounding Sacsayhuamán

Fortress of the Inca Sacsayhuamán

Step inside the empire's greatest military base

Written by Ailsa Harvey

Nothing exhibits true power quite like a fortress. Today, architectural marvels can be created with contrasting ease, but during the time of the Inca Empire these massive structures provided an area of safety while displaying the immense human-power it would have taken to construct. The greatest need for a fortress was at the centre of the empire, and rulers ordered the building work to increase their protection. If enemies managed to conquer the surrounding Inca settlements, they would soon face the challenge of infiltrating Sacsayhuamán.

Covering over 7,400 acres across the mountains surrounding the city of Cusco in Peru, the Inca built an admirable fortress. Each carefully placed stone of the Inca's largest fortress displays the talent and sheer power of the 20,000 people who built during the reign of Túpac Inca (although some archaeologists believe the Inca extended a site originally built by the Killke people, who lived in the region around Cusco between 900 and 1200 CE). Records show no evidence of animals or devices to help transport these hefty weights. Workers had to roll the building blocks with their bodies, bringing material from far and wide as they navigated over the hills with them. Finally complete, at 3,500 metres above sea level, the location was a perfect choice to defend its inhabitants and valuables.

Situated above the city, watchmen would be able to spot signs of invasion in time to prepare for battle and defend their homes. Additionally, the maze of hills surrounding them meant that there were limited routes that a trespasser could take when approaching. The great walls were successful in providing a secure home for Cusco's people for almost a century after they were built.

Inca architects manipulated the gigantic stones, which were each around four metres in height and weighed thousands of kilograms, to build walls up to 18 metres tall. This seemingly indestructible design lasted until the Spanish invaded and took over the fortress halfway through the 16th century. The Europeans gained entry by attacking on horseback, before climbing over the fortress walls on ladders and slaughtering those inside.

The Inca Empire may have surrendered its mighty fortress, but in some form it still lives on. If you visit Sacsayhuamán, the stone ruins you will observe aren't the original design. As different Inca rulers took charge of the fortress, and as building knowledge evolved, the walls were changed. The very first version of Sacsayhuamán actually only used mud and clay. Late on, the clay bricks were swapped for the more substantial rocks – many of which have remained in position right through to the current day.

Constructing this citadel would have been no easy feat for the Inca. Each stone would need to have been precisely cut and shaped using other, harder stones and bronze tools. They also had to contend with Mother Nature. And yet no storm nor earthquake has yet succeeded in hauling down the fortresses' robust walls, and the reason for this is Inca ingenuity.

The stones the Inca used were shaped so that they slotted tightly next to each other and yet could move minute amounts during an earthquake. This flexibility enabled the stones to fall back into place after the shock waves had passed and thereby avoid cracking and crumbling.

Visiting the site today, you can observe the placement of these boulders. It is impossible to fit even a piece of paper between some stone segments, while other parts give the impression that the stones were never apart.

Stepping inside its strong outer shell, three tiny doors lead into Sacsayhuamán's individual terraces, separated by the evenly spaced zig-zag walls. This limited the entry options available to would-be attackers and thereby made the interior more secure.

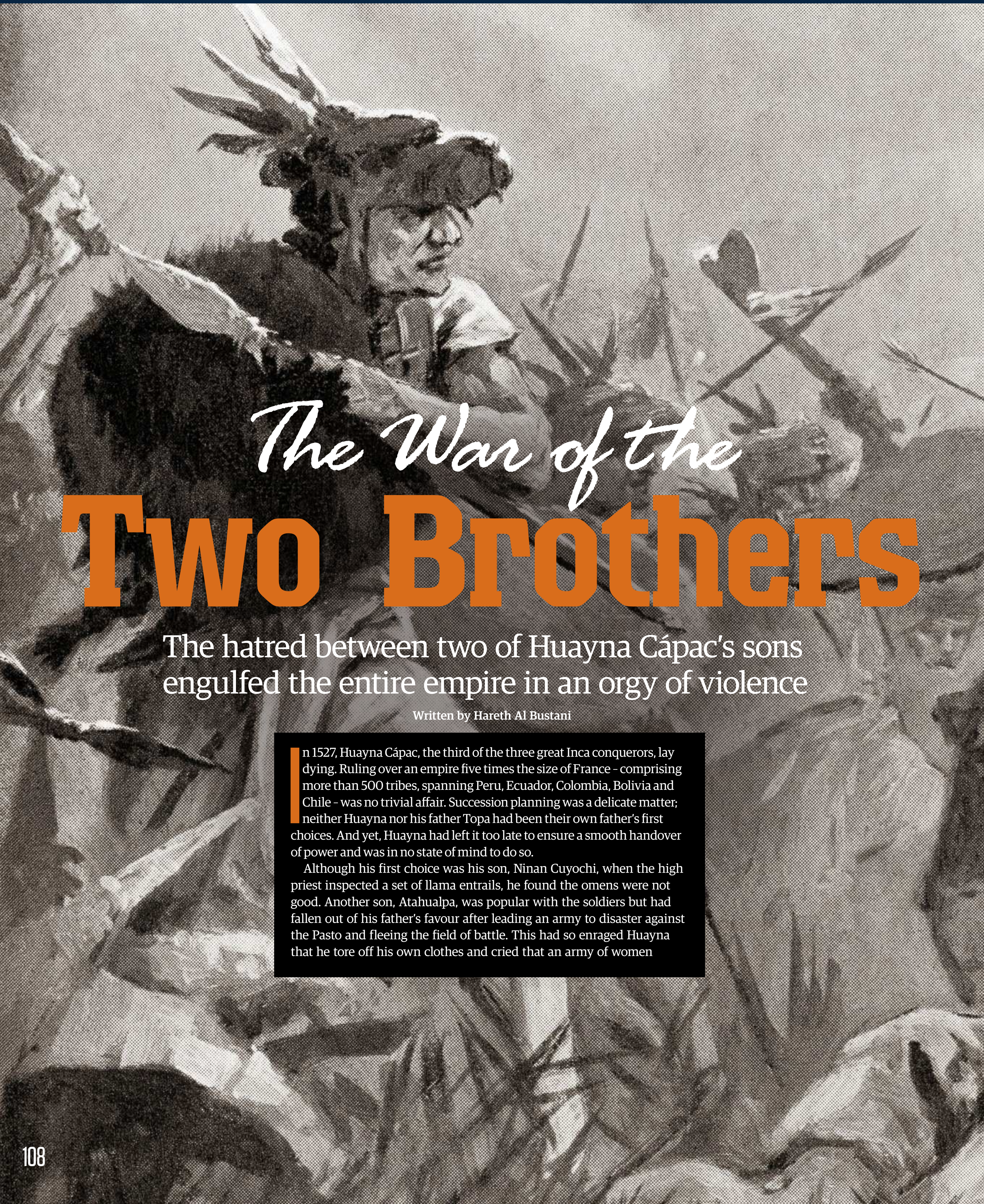
The heart of the fortress is thought to have held a multi-storey, protruding tower that was connected to towers that once lined the walls. While no longer intact, the remains of this structure relay the shape and position. Other features included a sizable viewing platform for the ruler to enjoy various ceremonies from and an area to control the water supply and send wastewater out of the complex.

There has been some debate as to the main purpose of this mammoth building project. The result was an area suitable and practical for over 1,000 warriors to base themselves ready for an invasion. However, for most of the time that it was occupied by the Inca Empire, it is believed to have provided a secure storage facility for armour, valuable tools and precious metals, as well as a venue for multiple ceremonies and celebrations.

For the majority of the time that Sacsayhuamán was home to the Inca perhaps its biggest contribution to daily life was providing a place for the community to carry out the ceremonies that shaped the identity of the growing empire.

Traditional Inca ceremonies continue within the ruins today

© Getty Images, Alamy



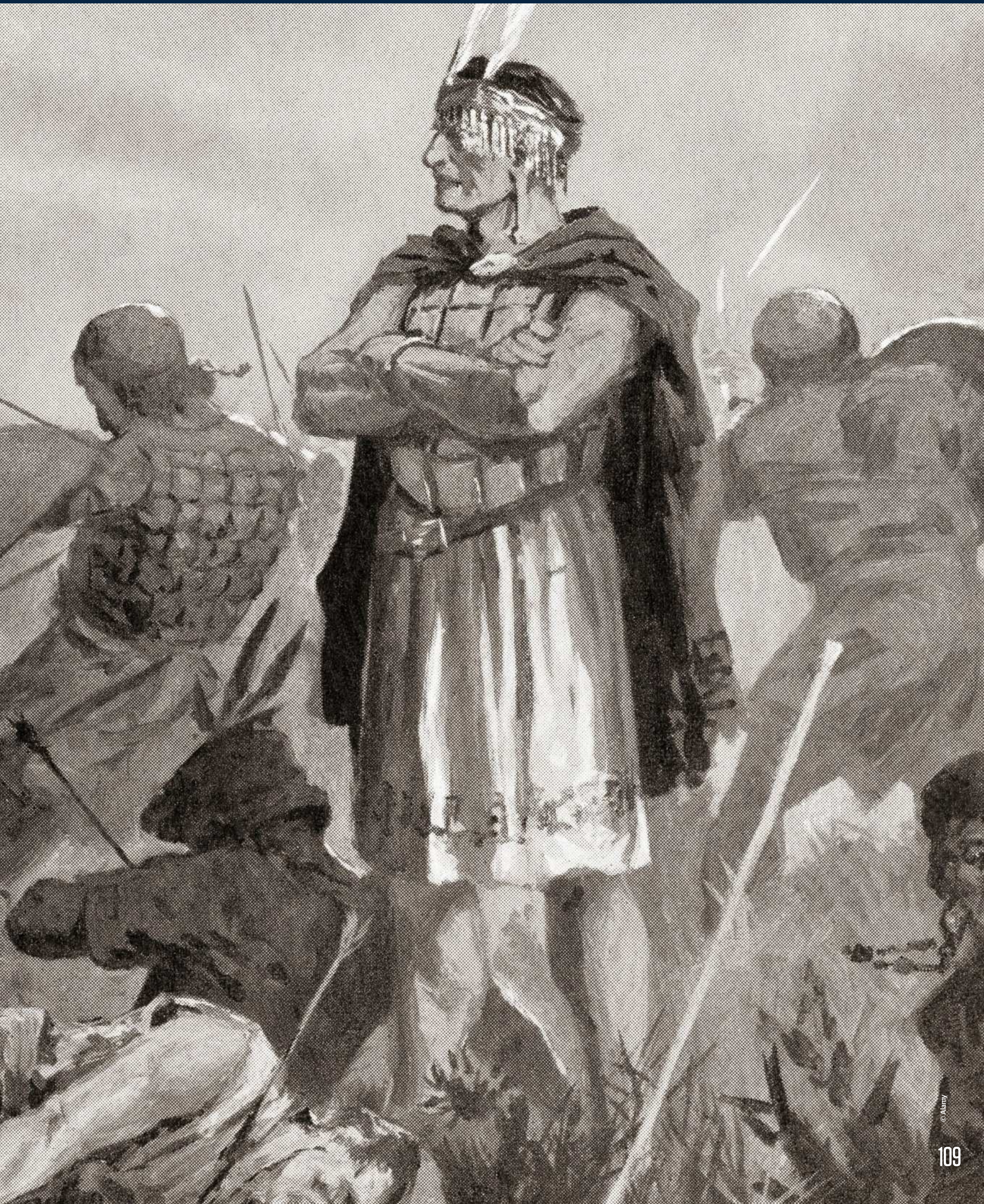
The War of the Two Brothers

The hatred between two of Huayna Cápac's sons engulfed the entire empire in an orgy of violence

Written by Hareth Al Bustani

In 1527, Huayna Cápac, the third of the three great Inca conquerors, lay dying. Ruling over an empire five times the size of France - comprising more than 500 tribes, spanning Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Bolivia and Chile - was no trivial affair. Succession planning was a delicate matter; neither Huayna nor his father Topa had been their own father's first choices. And yet, Huayna had left it too late to ensure a smooth handover of power and was in no state of mind to do so.

Although his first choice was his son, Ninan Cuyochi, when the high priest inspected a set of llama entrails, he found the omens were not good. Another son, Atahualpa, was popular with the soldiers but had fallen out of his father's favour after leading an army to disaster against the Pasto and fleeing the field of battle. This had so enraged Huayna that he tore off his own clothes and cried that an army of women



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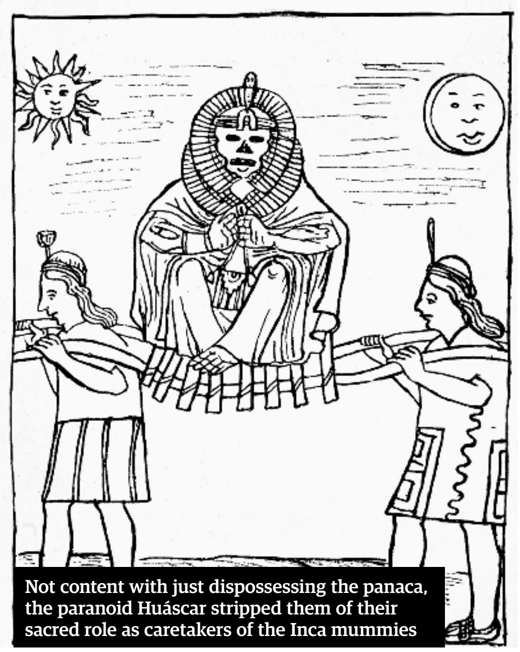
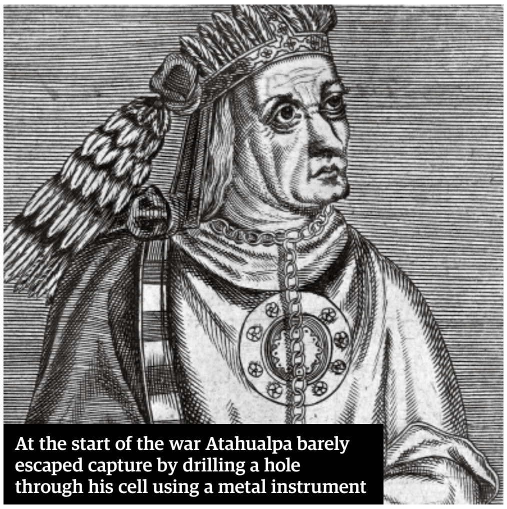
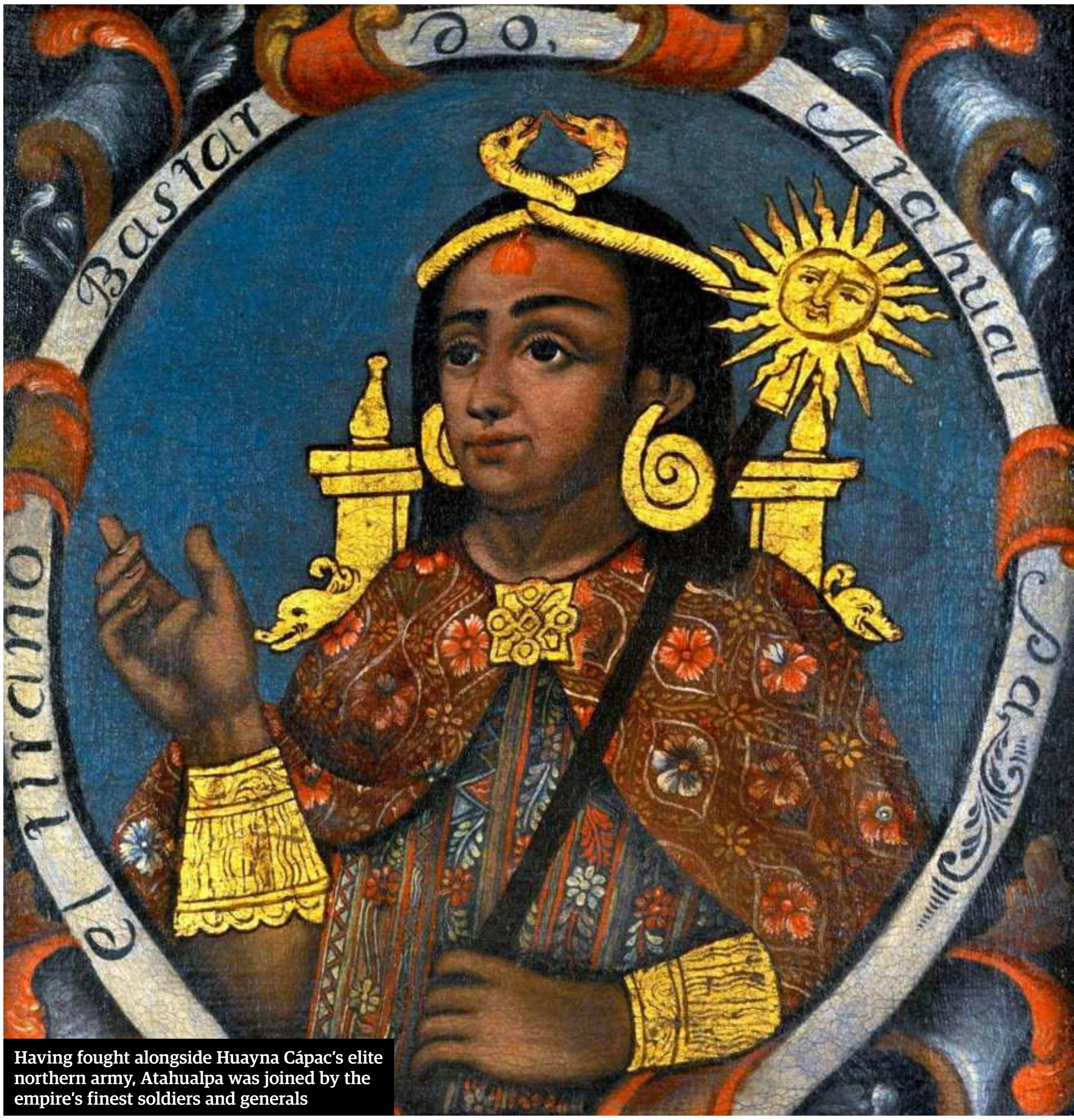


Not content with just dispossessing the panaca, the paranoid Huáscar stripped them of their sacred role as caretakers of the Inca mummies



At the start of the war Atahualpa barely escaped capture by drilling a hole through his cell using a metal instrument



Having fought alongside Huayna Cápac's elite northern army, Atahualpa was joined by the empire's finest soldiers and generals

would have fared better. So, instead, when Huayna died, the honour fell to his second choice, his son Huáscar. The ill-fated Ninan succumbed to smallpox soon after.

When Huayna's funeral procession arrived in Cusco, although Huáscar was escorted by 40 brothers, he could not help but notice that the most prominent, Atahualpa, had not showed up. While Huáscar was renowned for his drunken licentiousness, Atahualpa had amassed prestige campaigning alongside his father's armies in the north, as they established a base at Tumipampa, powerful enough to rival Cusco itself.

Huáscar knew well from his northern allies, such as the Cañari, how popular Atahualpa was with the empire's elite warriors, and he worried that his brother might already be plotting against him. After all, the Inca capital itself was divided. Upper Cusco, where Atahualpa was from, was intrinsically linked with the army, while Lower Cusco, Huáscar's home, was loyal to the priestly hierarchy of Coricancha. To the religious establishment, Huáscar's appointment presented a precious opportunity to neuter the military's growing influence.

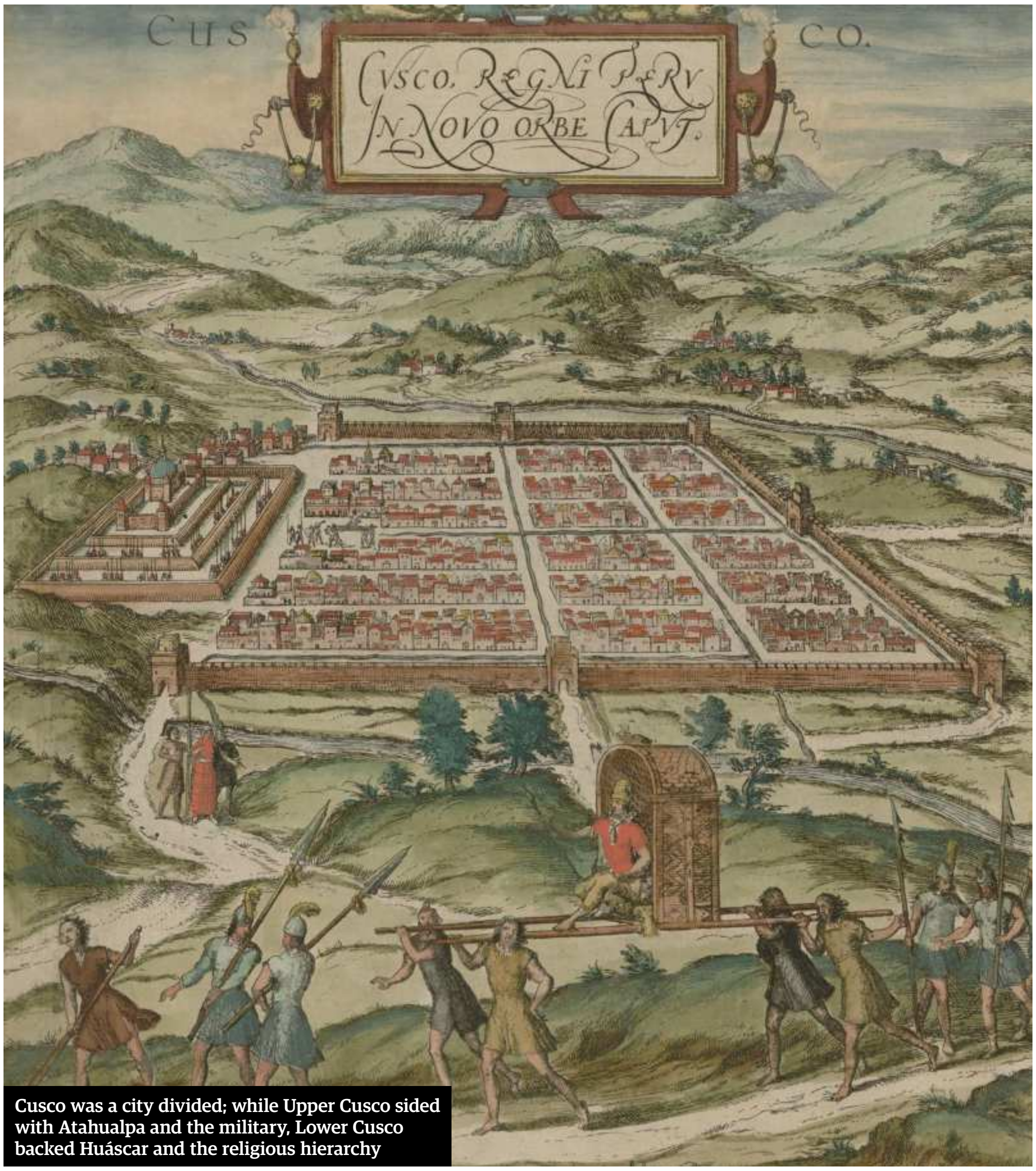
"Huáscar worried that his brother might already be plotting against him"

Although Atahualpa had not outwardly given his brother any reason to suspect him, to Huáscar, his absence alone was reason enough. Huayna's mummified corpse had not even reached the city before Huáscar had driven himself into a blind rage, screaming at his Upper Cusco nobles for failing to bring his brother with them and accusing them of plotting a coup on his behalf. When even under torture they maintained their innocence, Huáscar simply had them killed, which the other Upper Cusco nobles understandably took as their cue to flee north to the sanctuary of Atahualpa's stronghold.

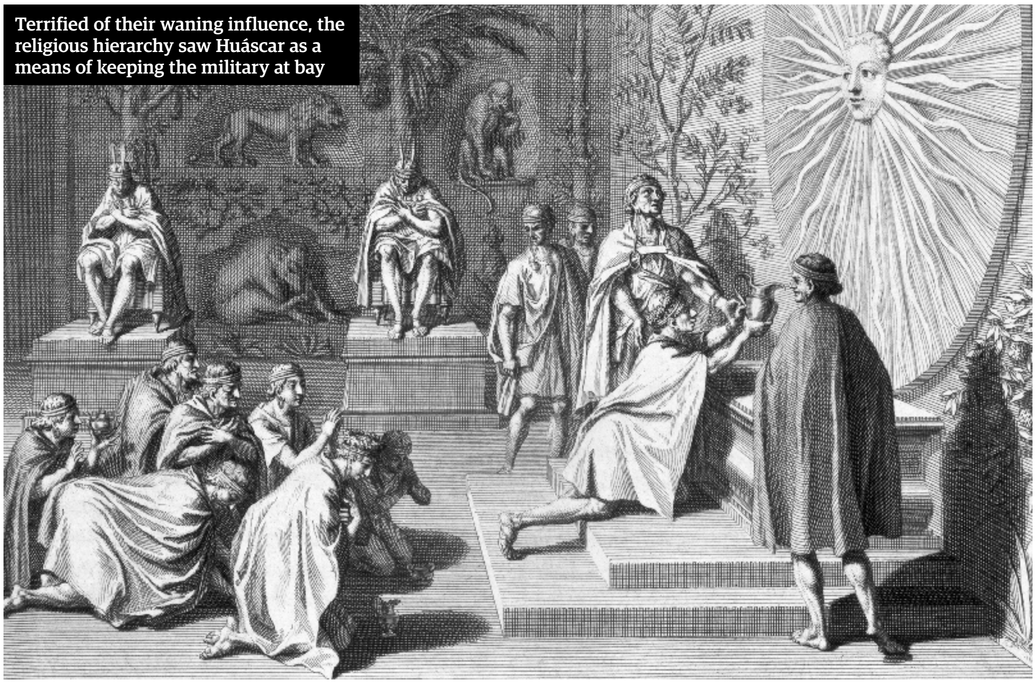
Meanwhile, a very real plot to kill the emperor and replace him with one of his other brothers was only discovered when the conspirators approached a Huáscar loyalist, who promptly outed them. Though Huáscar quickly had the would-be assassins executed, the incident only further fuelled his paranoia.

Up north, Atahualpa was busying himself with the construction of several new palaces for Huáscar in Tumipampa. However, a local chief took a disliking to him and wrote to Huáscar implying that the works were ostentatious symbols of Atahualpa's treasonous intent. Enraged, Huáscar this time screamed at his mother and sister, blaming them for leaving Atahualpa in Tumipampa with his father's senior northern generals.

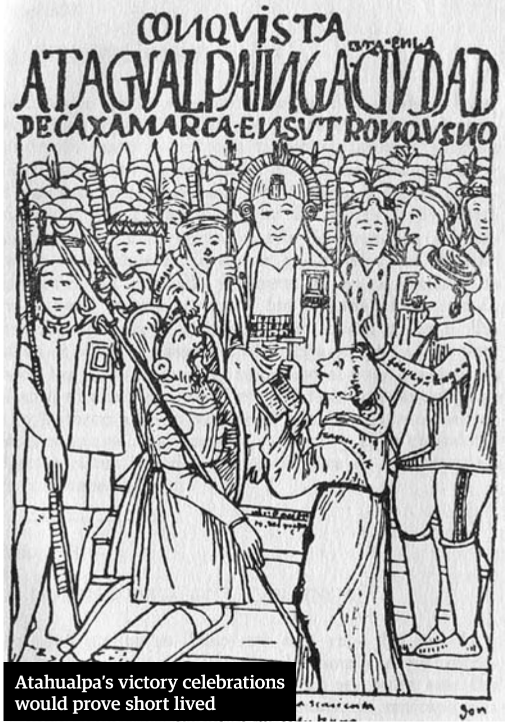
Soon after, Atahualpa sent his brother a customary series of luxurious gifts to congratulate him on his coronation. Rather than staking any sort of claim, he asked his brother to appoint him



Cusco was a city divided; while Upper Cusco sided with Atahualpa and the military, Lower Cusco backed Huáscar and the religious hierarchy



Terrified of their waning influence, the religious hierarchy saw Huáscar as a means of keeping the military at bay



Atahualpa's victory celebrations would prove short lived

to the lesser post of governor of Quito. However, the gesture sent a short-fused, perhaps drunken Huáscar over the edge. He tortured and killed his brother's messengers, before having their skins turned into drums. He left a few alive, so they could carry back his own 'gift' to his brother; a bundle of women's clothes, jewels and cosmetics - quite the slap in the face for a son of the great Huayna Cápac.

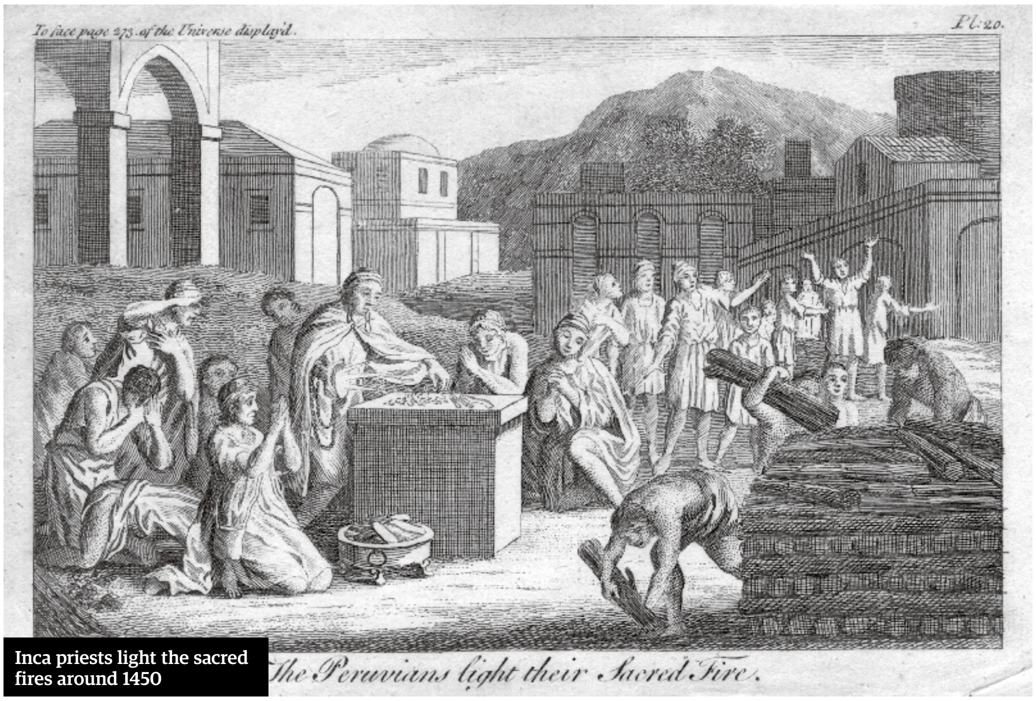
Despite living side by side with Atahualpa, the Cañari remained loyal to Huáscar, insisting to the emperor that his brother's continued presence in the north was the gravest of threats. Convinced, Huáscar sent three successive envoys demanding Atahualpa come to Cusco or else be dragged there by an army.

At this point, for Atahualpa, having seen so many tortured and butchered by his vengeful brother, surrender was not an option. Moreover, with the bulk of the empire's finest soldiers and captains by his side, the odds were in his favour. Sensing their fates were now tied to his, Atahualpa's generals formally threw their lot in with him. Civil war had come to the Inca Empire.

Not one to fight his own battles, Huáscar sent his general Atoc north to launch a pre-emptive attack on Tumipampa before Atahualpa had a chance to rally his army. In the ensuing chaos, as Atahualpa defended the city's main bridge, he was captured by Atoc and his Cañari allies and locked in a stone warehouse.

Later that night, as his captors drank and revelled in their swift success, Atahualpa used a metal bar - gifted to him by a lady visitor - to painstakingly drill a hole in the wall. The party outside was so debauched that no one even noticed as he slipped out of his makeshift prison and into the darkness beyond.

© Alamy (mummy, Cusco, Atahualpa's victory); rest Getty Images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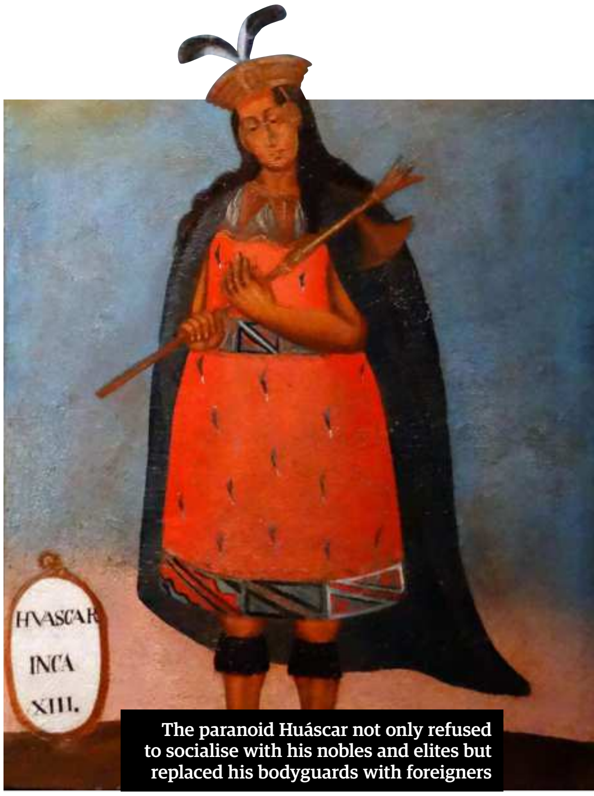
The Peruvians light their Sacred Fire.

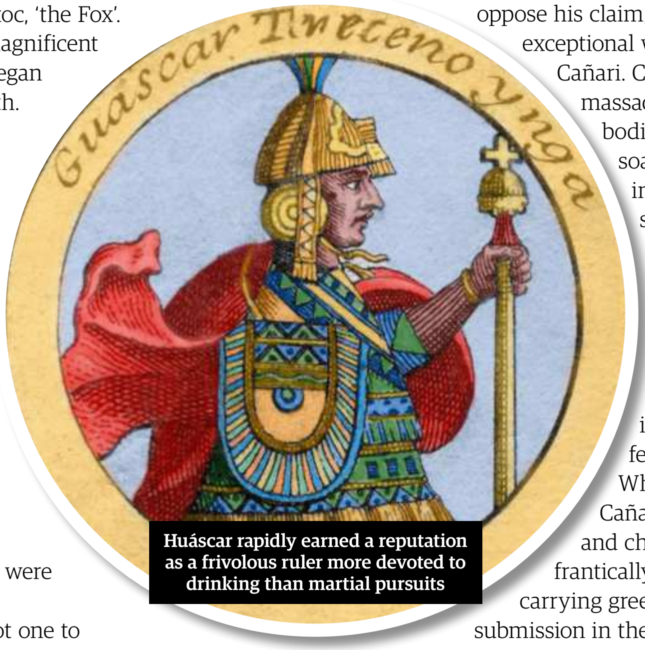
Inca priests light the sacred fires around 1450



The paranoid Huáscar not only refused to socialise with his nobles and elites but replaced his bodyguards with foreigners

“Atahualpa butchered their men, razed their buildings and tore up their land”

When Atahualpa returned to his men, none could believe their eyes. Sensing an opportunity, he propagandised the incident, claiming that his father, the Sun, had transformed him into a serpent so that he could slip through a small hole in the wall. Bleeding from one of his ears, which he had torn during his great escape, Atahualpa vowed to exact revenge on the accursed Cañari. But first he would have to deal with his brother's general, Atoc, ‘the Fox’.



Huáscar rapidly earned a reputation as a frivolous ruler more devoted to drinking than martial pursuits

After levying a magnificent army at Quito, he began his long march south. Just beyond the city of Ambato in the plains of Mochacaxa, he met the army of Atoc. Unfortunately for Atoc, the empire's finest warriors and generals were on the opposing side - his inexperienced men had been cobbled together at the last minute and were promptly overrun.

Atahualpa was not one to forget a grudge. He had not forgotten the cruelty his brother dealt to his messengers, and had he not escaped Atoc's clutches he would have suffered a similarly grisly fate. Returning the favour, Atahualpa had Atoc tortured and slowly killed with arrows and darts before allegedly turning his skull into a gilded drinking cup. Not one to rest on his laurels, Atahualpa pressed on to Cañari territory, storming the city of Tumipampa and unleashing hell upon its populace. His grandfather's mighty city soon lay in ruins.

Furious, he continued down the Ecuadorian coast, utterly annihilating all who dared oppose his claim, reserving exceptional wrath for the Cañari. City by city, he massacred every able-bodied Cañari man, soaking the streets in their blood. Word soon spread of his cruelty. One story told of how he rounded up three Cañari chiefs, had their hearts torn out alive, cut them into tiny pieces and fed them to his men. When he approached Cañari cities, women and children would frantically run to the road, carrying green branches of submission in their hands to no avail. Atahualpa butchered their men, razed their buildings and tore up their land with such fury that before long people were hurling themselves at his feet pleading for mercy.

However, when he reached the island of La Puná, in the region of Tumbes, straddling northwestern Peru and Ecuador, he found a people fiercely loyal to Huáscar who refused to cow in fear. Now on the rampage, Atahualpa had his men build a fleet of rafts and led an attack on the island, but the islanders played to their strengths, sallying out to meet them on the open sea. There, the La Puná navy dealt Atahualpa a bitter defeat, sending him back to shore with a wounded leg.

Further south, near Huamachuco, Atahualpa consulted a famous oracle and was warned that the god Viracocha was displeased with the extreme levels of cruelty he had unleashed. Atahualpa was apparently so infuriated that he not only ordered the old man be beheaded but destroyed the adjacent sacred huaca stone and even the hill it stood on. As the stakes grew higher, he decided to delegate command of his military to his generals, Challcuchima and Quizquiz - the finest in the Inca world.

Back in Cusco, Huáscar was continuing to weaken his own position. Not only was he perceived as a hedonistic, frivolous, cruel fool with neither honour nor courage, but he failed to pay the proper respect to those that had remained loyal to him. As the emperor, he was expected to mingle regularly with the royals, nobles and leading clans at the public plaza's great feasts, but he neglected this duty. To make matters worse, he ejected the traditional clans from the royal bodyguard and instead began to scandalously surround himself with foreign Cañari and Chachapoya warriors. Going a step further, increasingly suspicious of Cusco's elites, he announced plans to strip the panaca, or royal clan, of their lands and possessions and even their role in conserving the mummified bodies of dead rulers. This was not just extremely disrespectful - it was sacrilege.

As Atahualpa's army descended the spine of the Andes it clashed with a southern army drawn from various tribes led by his brother Huanca Auqui - still loyal to Huáscar. After a series of bitter battles, Challcuchima and Quizquiz pushed Huanca back south before overwhelming and wiping his army out. Seemingly unstoppable, Atahualpa's forces bulldozed their way towards Cusco, where Huáscar pulled together one last army from the remnants of his principal provinces (as far as Chile) and finally took charge himself. Emboldened by a major victory at Cotapampa - where the northern army suffered severe losses - as Challcuchima and Quizquiz approached Cusco, Huáscar boldly decided to bring his army outside into open-field combat. However, his strategy was so poorly conceived that Atahualpa's generals ended up outmanoeuvring and capturing him.

Huáscar was dragged through the city in shame - arms bound, dripping with blood, his clothes torn to shreds. His tunic was ripped from his body and replaced with a bloody rag pulled from one of his dead foreign soldiers. Meanwhile, his golden axe and helmet were sent north to Atahualpa, alongside the royal insignia.

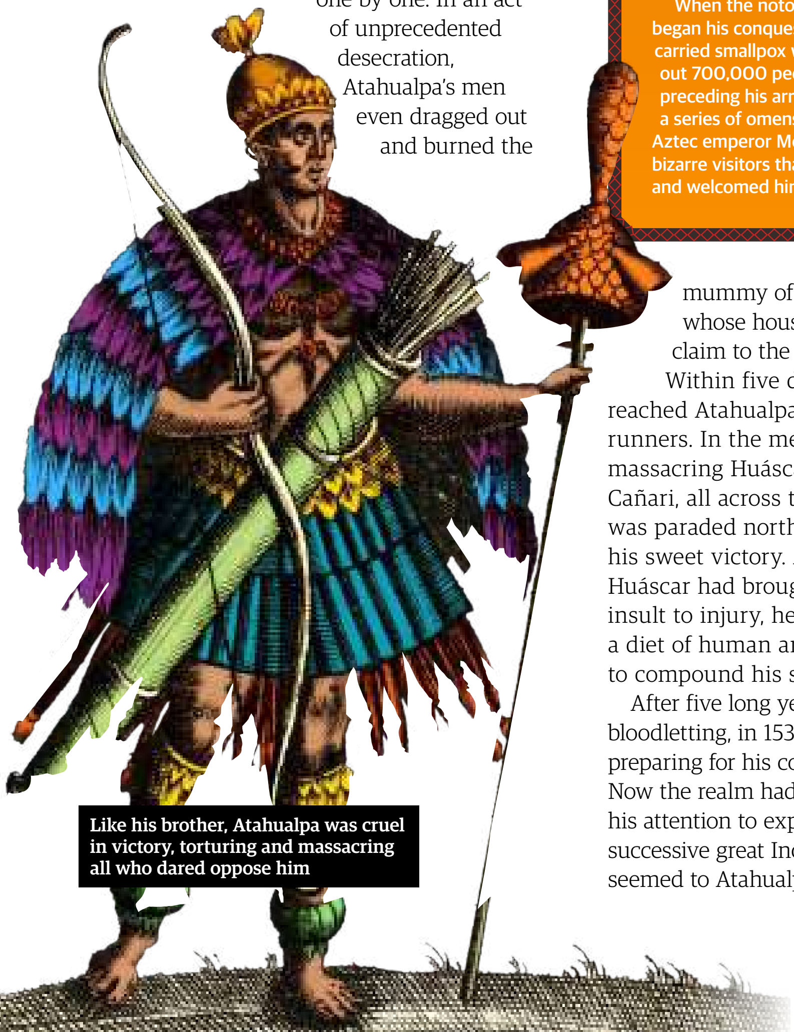
Atahualpa's men were unspeakably brutal in victory. As they marched through the capital, they rounded up Huáscar's many wives and 80 children and then forced him to watch as they were whipped and tortured before being clubbed to death and mutilated one by one. In an act of unprecedented desecration, Atahualpa's men even dragged out and burned the mummy of his grandfather Topa Inca, whose house had supported Huáscar's claim to the throne.

Within five days news of the victory reached Atahualpa via his network of 300 relay runners. In the meantime, his men continued massacring Huáscar's associates, such as the Cañari, all across the empire. Huáscar himself was paraded north to Atahualpa, who relished his sweet victory. As far as he was concerned, Huáscar had brought this upon himself. Adding insult to injury, he had his wretched brother fed a diet of human and dog faeces and llama urine to compound his suffering.

After five long years of indiscriminate bloodletting, in 1532 Atahualpa finally began preparing for his coronation ceremony in Cusco. Now the realm had been reunited, he could turn his attention to expanding it, becoming the fourth successive great Inca conqueror. However, while it seemed to Atahualpa that the Sun was beginning to rise once again over the Inca Empire, in fact it had already begun to set for the last time. The civil war had exhausted the Inca Empire just when it would need all it strength.

As the emperor made his way south, reports began to trickle in of bizarre foreigners with hairy faces marching through the Andes on large, fantastical beasts. Wielding magical exploding sticks, they were seen torturing and murdering some provincial chieftains. These were the Spanish conquistadors, invaders from across the endless ocean who had not only already torn down the mighty Aztec Empire of Mesoamerica but brought over the disease that killed Huayna Cápac: smallpox.

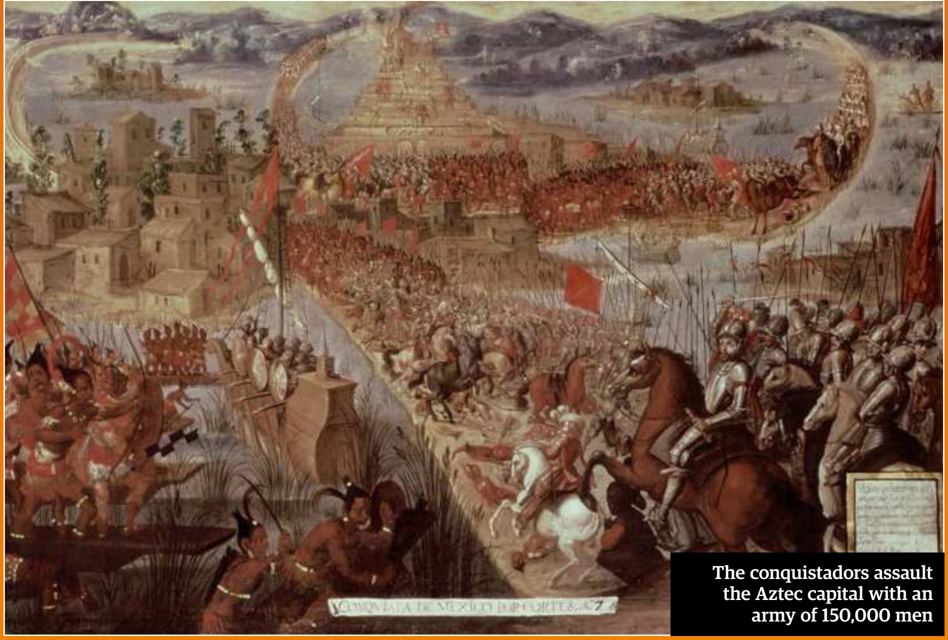
Unaware of these events, Atahualpa, victorious warrior king and ruler of all the Inca, took a sip from the gilded skull of Atoc and laughed to himself. Let these fools wander for a while. What harm could they possibly inflict upon the greatest empire under the Sun?



Like his brother, Atahualpa was cruel in victory, torturing and massacring all who dared oppose him

The omen

The arrival of smallpox was an aftershock of the Aztec Armageddon


CONQVISTA DE MEXICO POR CORTES

The conquistadors assault the Aztec capital with an army of 150,000 men

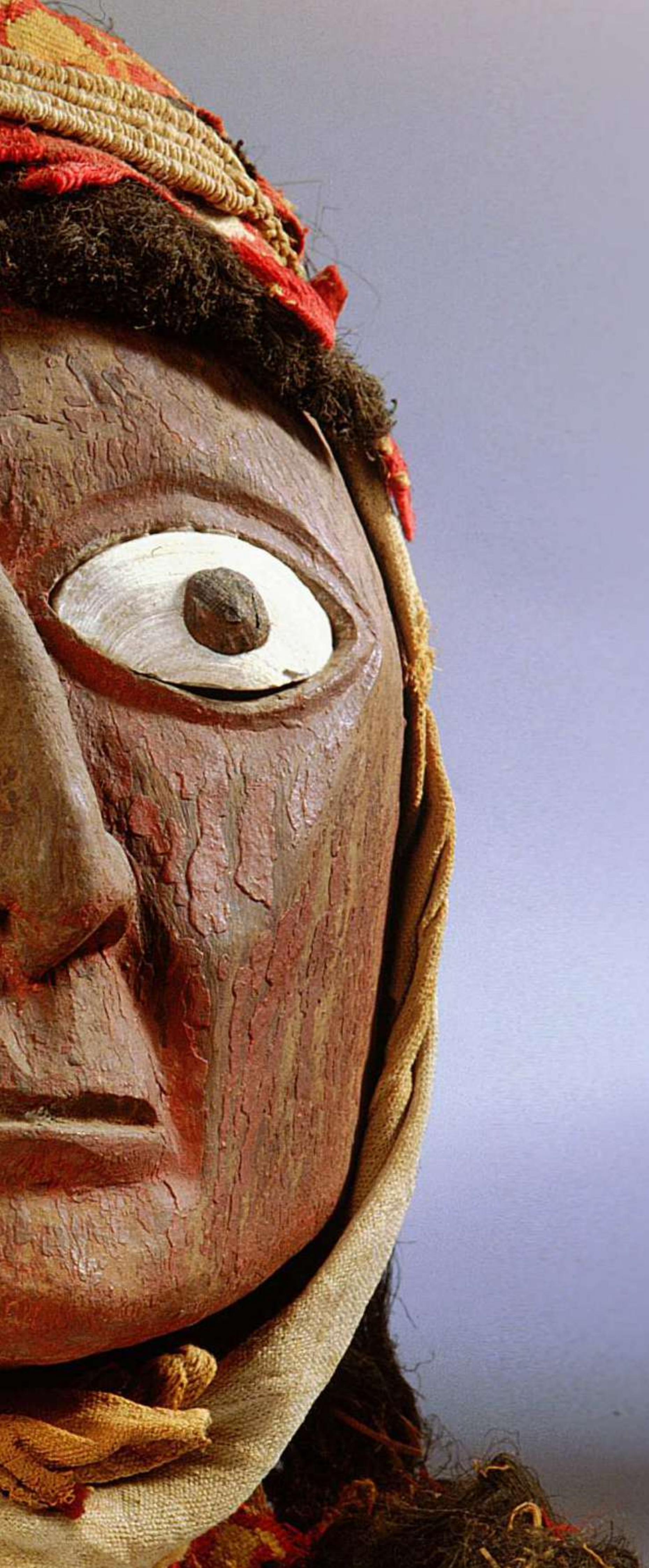
After finishing his conquest of Ecuador, Huayna Cápac began receiving reports of a dreadful new plague that caused rashes to break out across people's bodies before killing them. The affliction, which would soon take the emperor's own life, was smallpox, one of many diseases that accompanied Christopher Columbus on his second voyage to the Caribbean in 1494.

When the notorious conquistador Hernán Cortés began his conquest of the Aztec Empire in 1519 he too carried smallpox with him, a disease that would wipe out 700,000 people in just two years. In the years preceding his arrival the Aztec Empire had witnessed a series of omens predicting the end of the world. The Aztec emperor Moctezuma II was so mystified by the bizarre visitors that he initially mistook Cortés as a god and welcomed him.

However, when the Spaniards tried to enforce their religion on the Aztec people tensions boiled over, culminating in the massacre of several Aztec nobles and priests by the conquistadors and their local allies, the Tlaxcalans. In the ensuing chaos, Moctezuma himself was killed alongside 1,000 conquistadors - Cortés himself barely escaped the city with his life.

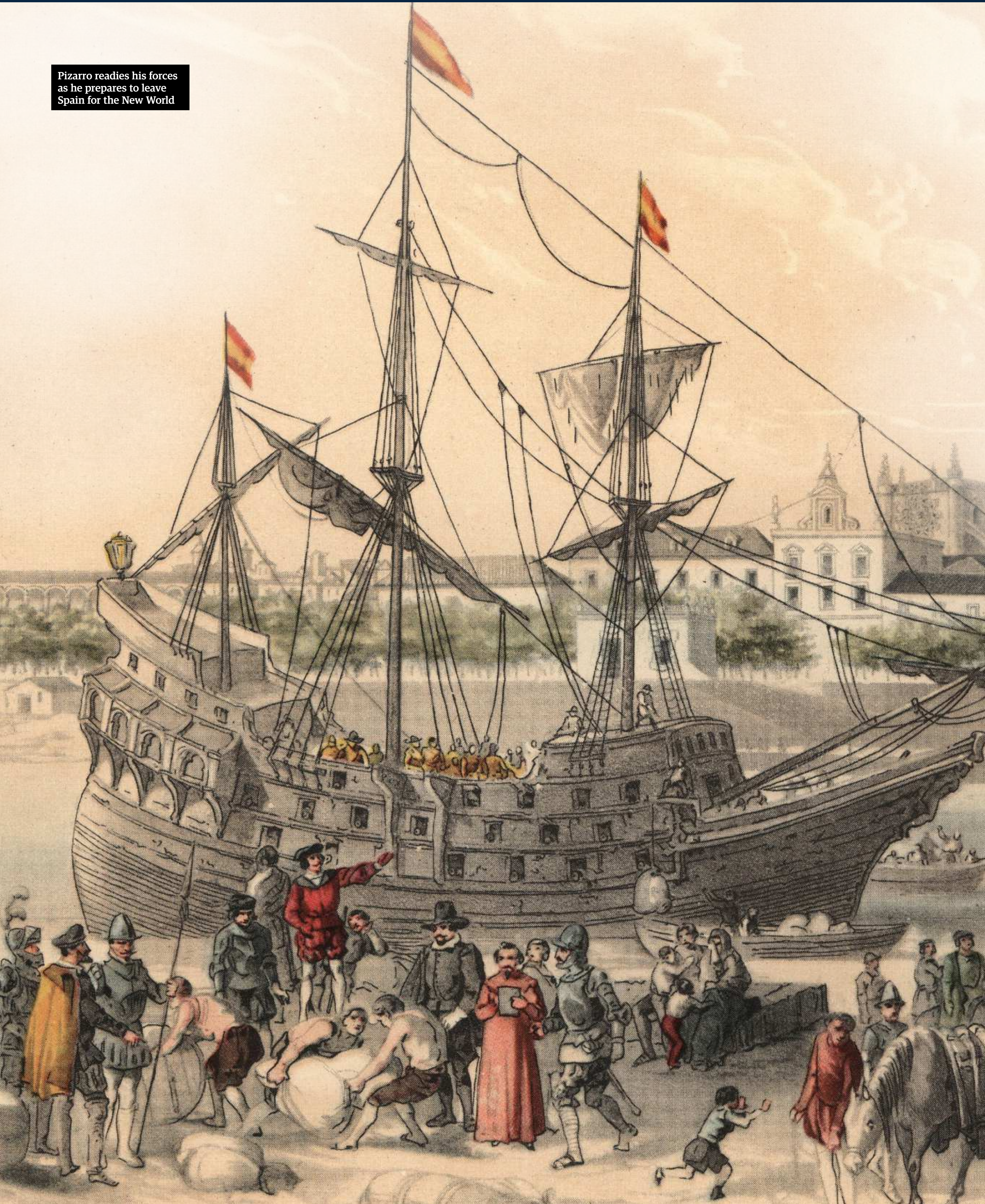
Despite being vastly outnumbered, the conquistadors scored a decisive victory at the Battle of Otumba, where Cortés led a suicidal cavalry charge, killing the new Aztec emperor and sending the Aztec fleeing. After a brief respite the conquistadors launched an 80-day siege on the Aztec capital with 150,000 local auxiliaries, destroying the city. In the aftermath, they tore down pyramids and temples across the empire, building convents and monasteries upon their foundations.

© Getty Images (funeral, priests, conquistadors), rest Alamy



Eyes front

This rather disturbing human effigy, featuring eyes made of shell inlay, may have been unearthed as part of a collection of items buried with an Inca mummy. Sporting a tapestry band, it dates to between 1100 and 1400 CE.

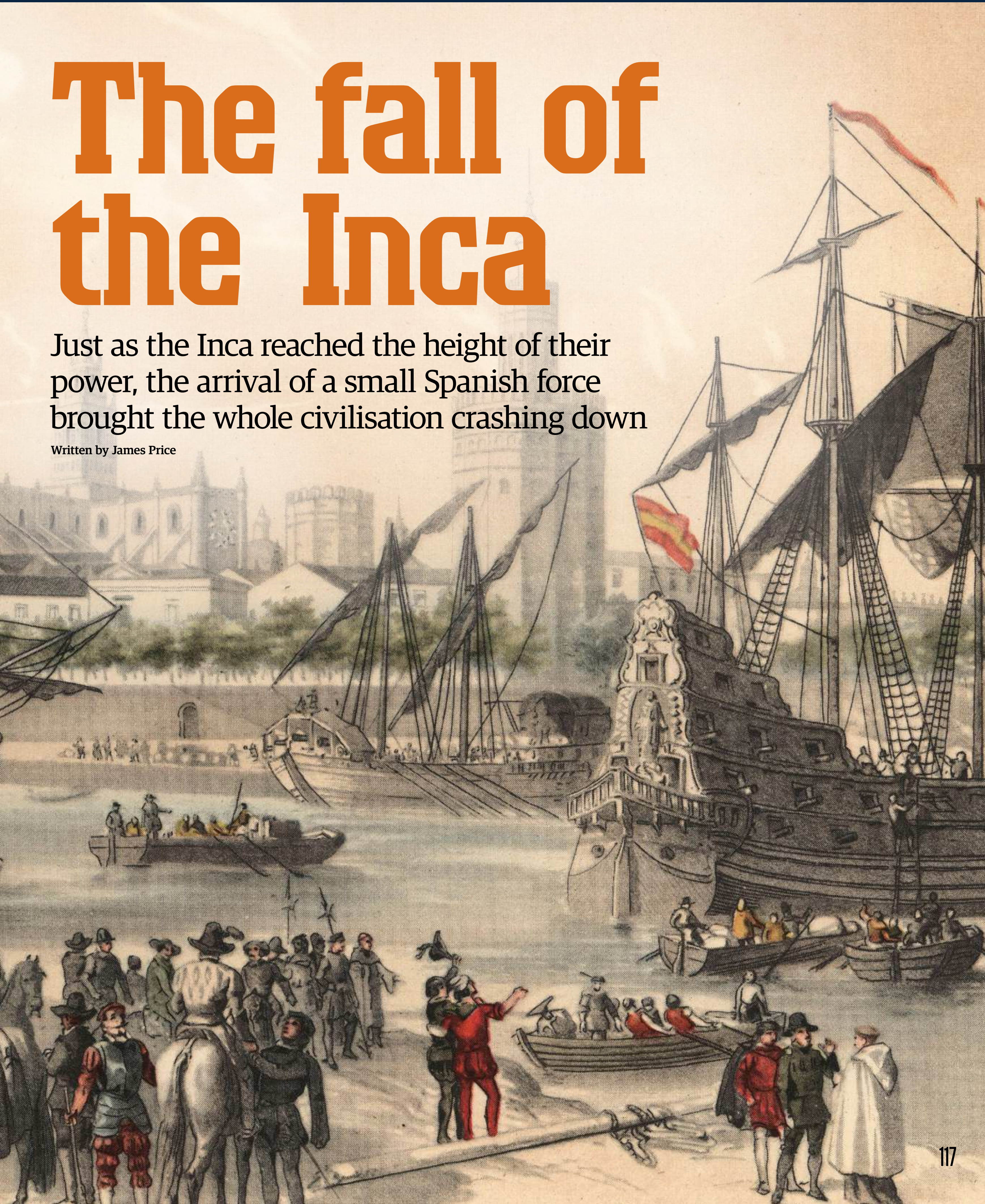


Pizarro readies his forces as he prepares to leave Spain for the New World

The fall of the Inca

Just as the Inca reached the height of their power, the arrival of a small Spanish force brought the whole civilisation crashing down

Written by James Price



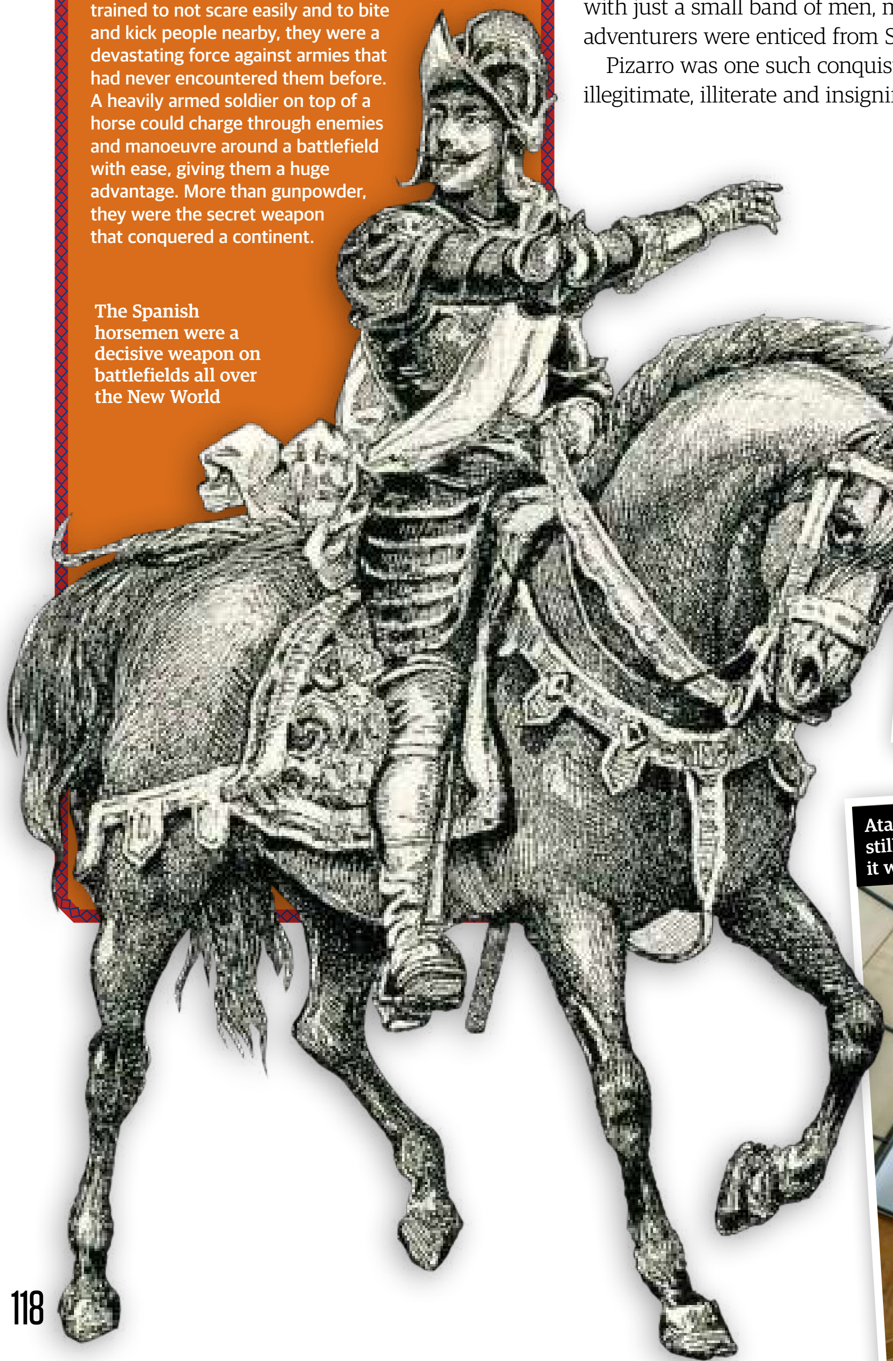
The cutting edge

The Spanish introduced a way of fighting that the Inca had never faced before

The sophistication and lethality of Spanish weapons gave them a major advantage when they fought the Inca. The Spanish benefitted from having steel swords – and Spanish steel was considered the best even by other Europeans. Steel swords cut and stabbed deeper and lasted for a lot longer than the stone or bronze weapons wielded by the Inca.

The Spanish also had gunpowder weapons, in particular arquebuses, which were a primitive type of musket. While dangerous, they were slow to use and didn't work well in wet conditions. However, they had immense shock value – the explosive sound, plumes of smoke and bullets that travelled faster than the eye could see all had a huge psychological impact.

The conquistadors' most fearsome weapon, however, was the warhorse. Big, fast and trained to not scare easily and to bite and kick people nearby, they were a devastating force against armies that had never encountered them before. A heavily armed soldier on top of a horse could charge through enemies and manoeuvre around a battlefield with ease, giving them a huge advantage. More than gunpowder, they were the secret weapon that conquered a continent.



The Spanish horsemen were a decisive weapon on battlefields all over the New World

In 1513, a band of Spanish adventurers – or conquistadors – cut its way through the jungles of Central America and came across something truly startling: a seemingly limitless ocean, stretching over the horizon. The explorers, led by Vasco Núñez de Balboa, were the first Europeans to see the Pacific Ocean. On their journeys they heard tales of wondrous places waiting to be explored. One told of a mighty people to the south who lived in a land filled with gold. Such tales were frequently reported, and most proved to be predictably false. But one man in Balboa's band never forgot them: Francisco Pizarro.

The conquistadors were men shaped by war, and most of them had served as soldiers and mercenaries in Europe. Following the discovery of the Americas, many headed out to the New World to use their fighting skills in the pursuit of wealth and status. Most faced only hardship, disappointment, illness and death, but once in a while a fortune was made. Following Hernán Cortés' conquest of the Aztec Empire in 1521 with just a small band of men, more and more adventurers were enticed from Spain.

Pizarro was one such conquistador. An illegitimate, illiterate and insignificant man from Extremadura, he was lured by those early promises of gold, land and adventure and rose to be a landowner in the newly founded colony of Panama. Pizarro had been on several campaigns of exploration, and though he was fairly well established in Panama, he still wanted more.

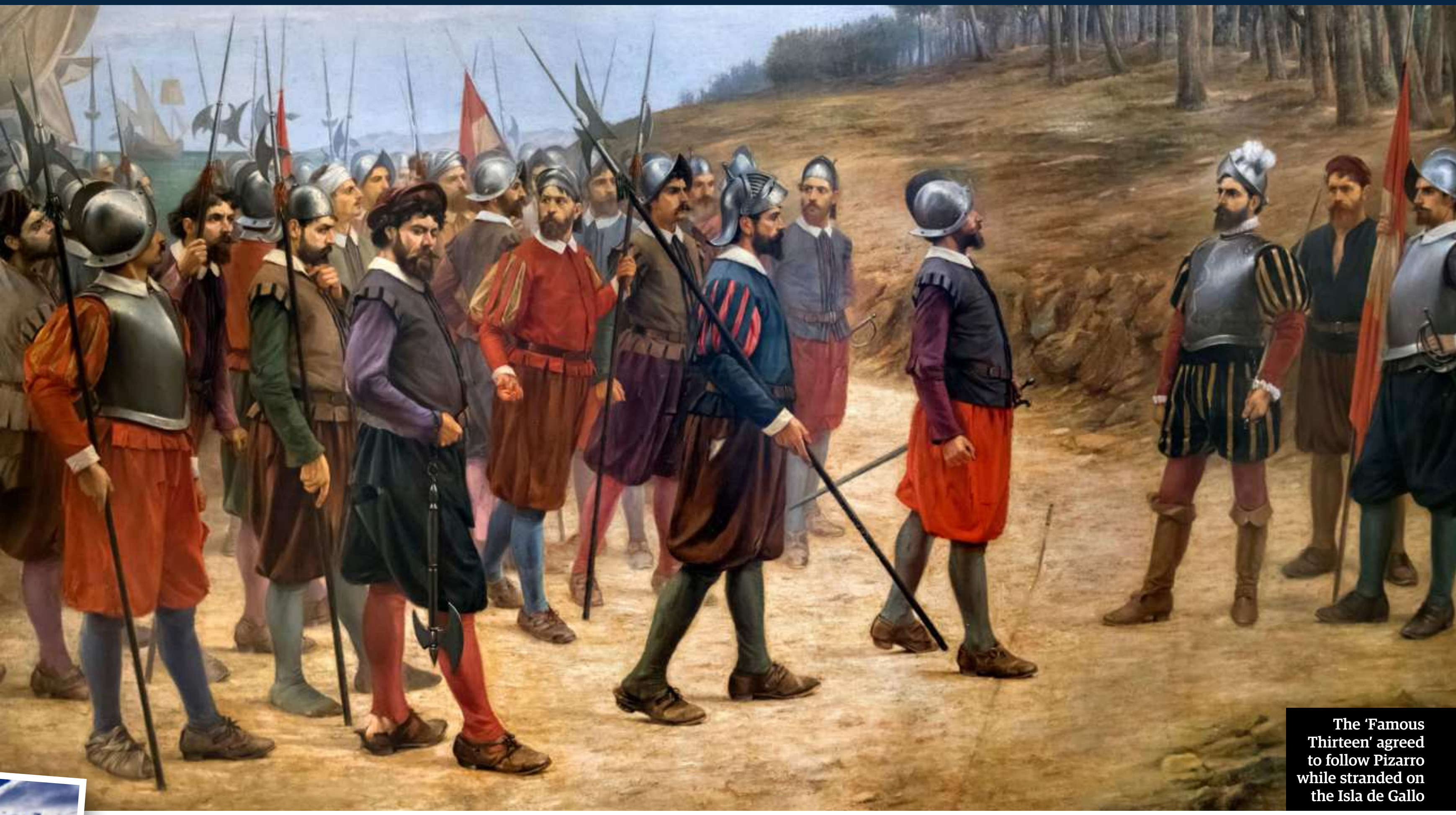
Pizarro set about arranging a mission of exploration alongside his partner Diego de Almagro with some funding from a priest named Hernando de Luque. Conquests were essentially business ventures backed by investors, and conquistadors were not paid a salary but instead took a percentage of any loot. It was aggressive global expansion for personal financial gain.

In 1524 Pizarro set off, heading south in the Pacific. It was not a success. Faced by poor weather, hostile natives and a lack of food, his force suffered immensely. Almagro lost an eye in one encounter, and eventually the expedition was forced to limp back to Panama with the loss of many men.

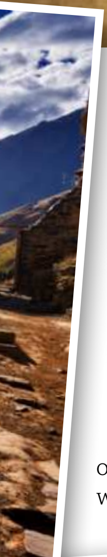
Pizarro and Almagro remained undeterred and set about raising the funds for another expedition. This they found extremely challenging on the back of their last attempt, but in 1526, with two ships and less than 200 men, they

Ollantaytambo was the Inca headquarters during the siege of Cusco. It was here that the Inca defeated the Spanish in open battle

Atahualpa's ransom room in Cajamarca still exists. The Sapa Inca promised to fill it with gold in exchange for his freedom



The 'Famous Thirteen' agreed to follow Pizarro while stranded on the Isla de Gallo



"The peaceful and excited meeting was a poignant moment when considering what was to come"

once again set off south. Again facing inclement weather, the party split up. Pizarro set up camp in what is now modern Colombia, while Almagro returned to Panama to drum up reinforcements. The seaman Bartolomé Ruiz continued south, where he encountered a native wooden boat carrying ceramic, cloth and – most appealingly for the Spanish – gold, silver and emeralds. Ruiz took several prisoners, with the intention of training them to be interpreters. He then returned to Pizarro, as did Almagro, but further exploration resulted in little.

Eventually, needing reinforcements and supplies but knowing that to return in failure to Panama once again would be their ruin, Pizarro and 80 men stayed behind on a wet, inhospitable island named Isla del Gallo while Almagro and Ruiz returned to Panama.

Pizarro's force waited for months. Some of the men had smuggled letters on Almagro's ship to the governor of Panama, pleading for rescue and claiming that Pizarro had lost his mind. The governor soon dispatched two ships with orders to rescue them. Faced with the prospect of failure, Pizarro made a final desperate plea to his dispirited men. Drawing a line in the sand with his sword, he pointed at the ground and declared, according to the historian William Prescott, "There lies Peru with its riches; Here, Panama and its poverty. Choose, each man, what best becomes a brave Castilian." Only 13 men crossed Pizarro's line in the sand (though Pizarro's secretary, Francisco Xerez, says it was 16). The rest, relieved to be escaping the desolate island, headed off on the rescue ships.

Faced with the lonely desolation of the island, Pizarro and his 13 men moved to the Isla de Gorgona nearby, which was at least more habitable. For another five or so months they waited, until Ruiz returned. They then headed south once again, and finally Pizarro had some success: they found the city of Tumbes.

Tumbes, in the northern part of the Inca Empire, was different to anything the conquistadors had encountered before, with strong stone buildings, organised streets and advanced irrigation. The people of Tumbes were both friendly and curious about the strangers and eagerly welcomed them into the town. Pizarro sent a man named Molina and an unnamed African servant ashore. They drew huge crowds and were taken on a tour of the town. They were awed by what they saw – to the point that Molina later requested to stay behind. More men came ashore, and gifts were freely exchanged. The peaceful and excited meeting was a poignant moment when considering what was soon to come.

Loaded with gold and goods traded with the people of Tumbes, Pizarro headed back to Panama a success. But he was already plotting to return, and this time he meant to stay.

The Inca position

Just as Pizarro was struggling to survive on Isla de Gorgona, the Inca world was poised to rip itself apart. Huayna Cápac had ruled for 30 years, but in around 1527 (the exact year is debatable) the Sapa Inca succumbed to a deadly, contagious disease that was sweeping across the empire. He possibly died of smallpox, a disease brought from Europe against which Native Americans had no immunity. The true cause of death is unknown, though sources seem to agree that a 'pestilence' struck Huayna Cápac.

His presumed heir, Ninan Cuyochi, also died of the disease. There was some suggestion that in his final hours Huayna Cápac was confused and demanded that the north and south of the empire be divided between two of his sons, Huáscar and Atahualpa, while others attested that Huáscar was named the sole heir. Whatever the case, the two brothers were on a deadly collision course.

Huáscar had the stronger claim. He was younger than Atahualpa, but his mother was the coya – the principal wife and her husband's sister – making him the rightful heir. Atahualpa was Huáscar's half-brother. Conquistador Pedro

18+

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Cieza de León laid out some of the differences between the two men: "Huáscar was merciful and pious: Atahualpa was cruel and vindictive. Both were generous, but the latter was a man of greater spirit and force of character, the former of more valour."

Huáscar was in Cusco when his father died and was quickly made Sapa Inca by the nobility. Atahualpa was in Quito in the north, alongside much of the army and the key Inca generals. He was widely respected in the army and had been Huayna Cápac's favourite son: "Atahualpa was loved by the old captains of his father and the soldiers, because he went to wars with them as a child, and because [his father] had loved him so during his lifetime," according to Cieza de León.

The two men seem to have reached a compromise, however. Atahualpa remained in Quito and swore fealty to Huáscar, acknowledging him as Sapa Inca. It was a truce that would not last, as the mestizo (half-Inca) chronicler Garcilaso wrote: "Both brothers were well satisfied, the one being very far from imagining the treasonable designs to deprive him of his life and his empire, the other very diligent and cautious to entrap him."

The onset of civil war

For several years Huáscar and Atahualpa coexisted peacefully, but eventually things came to a head in around 1531. Several accounts say that Huáscar grew resentful of Atahualpa and wished to exist without a challenger or threat. Huáscar moved against Atahualpa, even briefly capturing his brother, but Atahualpa escaped and rallied his forces in Quito. His generals, Quizquiz and Challcuchima, defeated Huáscar's force in the north and marched on Cusco. Outside the capital city, at the Battle of Quipaipán, they destroyed the defending force and captured Huáscar.

What happened next is contentious. Many of the chroniclers tell of Atahualpa ordering massacres of Huáscar's forces and family. Garcilaso states that "not content with the blood of his own two hundred brothers, the sons of the great Huayna Cápac, he [Atahualpa] passed on to drink that of his nephews, uncles, and other relations… so that none of the blood royal might escape." The tales of brutality were likely exaggerated, but it was the end of Huáscar as Sapa Inca.

The civil war greatly weakened the Inca state, divided loyalty and thrust a new man into power just as the Inca faced their greatest threat. It was a devastating series of events that played right into the hands of the Spanish. Pedro Pizarro, Francisco Pizarro's cousin, wrote that, "If Huayna Cápac had been alive when we invaded Peru, we could not have won for he was greatly loved by his people; if the country had not been divided by the wars between his successors, we could neither have invaded, nor triumphed – not even if over a thousand Spanish troops had come at once."

> "The civil war greatly weakened the Inca state and thrust a new man into power just as the Inca faced their greatest threat"

A voyage of conquest

Following his success at Tumbes, Pizarro went to Spain to announce his discoveries and gain royal permission to conquer the region. It was a win-win situation for the crown, as Pizarro would have to fund the campaign himself; the crown would reap any benefits for no investment or risk. In exchange Pizarro was made governor of the as-yet-unconquered lands. Almagro, however, received very little, despite being Pizarro's equal.

In 1531, at the age of 60, Pizarro once again set off from Panama. His company was a woefully inadequate force of three ships, 180 men and 27 horses. The conquistadors set off by sea, then landed in modern-day Ecuador and proceeded on foot, ransacking towns. Their aim was to reach Tumbes again. However, upon reaching the city they found only desolation. The buildings were destroyed, the land burnt and the people gone. Pizarro learnt that Tumbes had been destroyed by the Puná, a nearby people, and heard of the wider civil war that was consuming the land. He could not have hoped for better news.

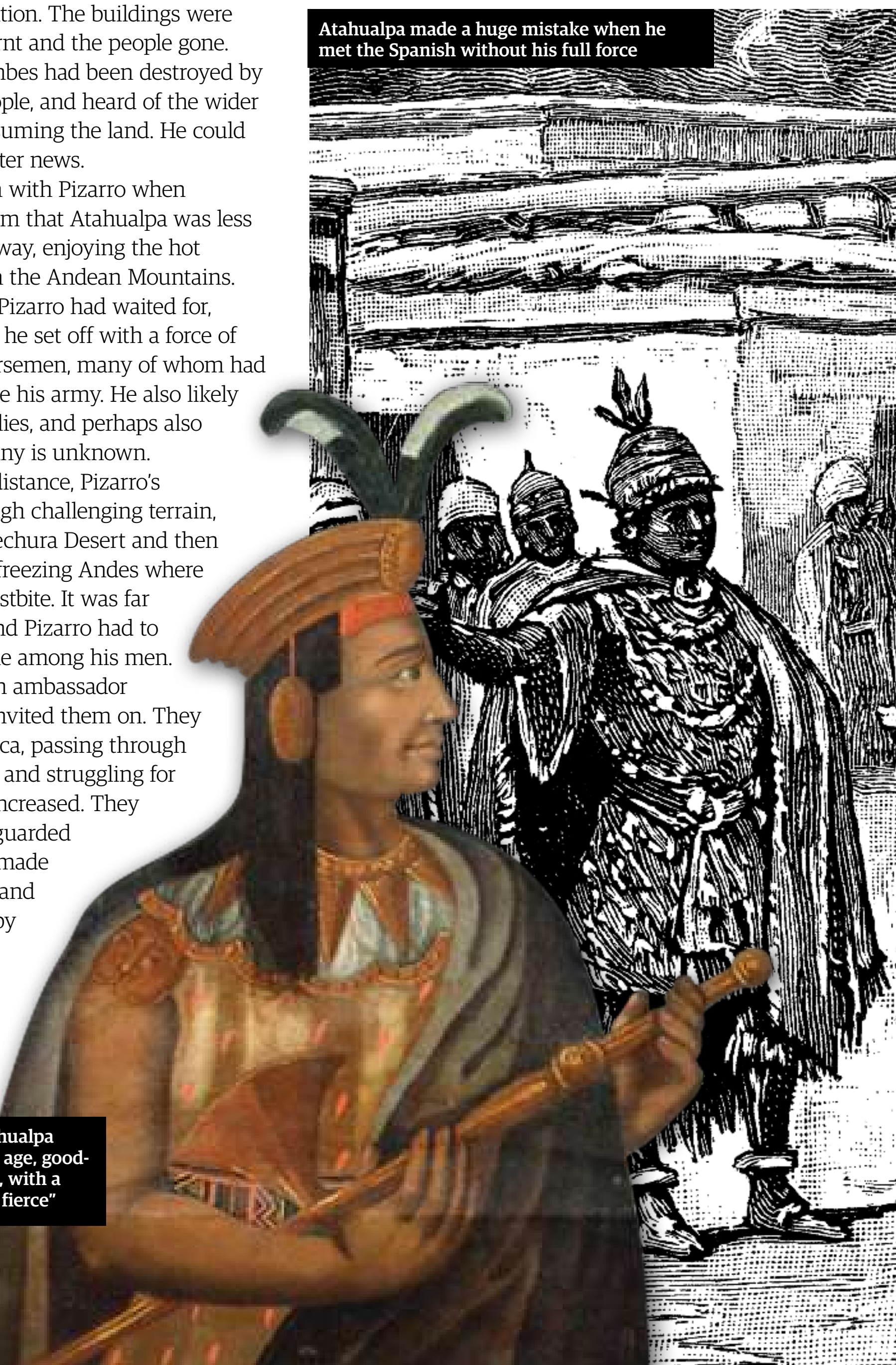
Luck was once again with Pizarro when information reached him that Atahualpa was less than 600 kilometres away, enjoying the hot springs at Cajamarca in the Andean Mountains. This was the moment Pizarro had waited for, and in September 1532 he set off with a force of 110 infantry and 67 horsemen, many of whom had arrived later to reinforce his army. He also likely had a force of native allies, and perhaps also slaves, though how many is unknown.

Despite the shorter distance, Pizarro's force had to pass through challenging terrain, moving through the Sechura Desert and then up the foothills to the freezing Andes where even the horses got frostbite. It was far from easy travelling, and Pizarro had to fight against low morale among his men.

En route they met an ambassador from Atahualpa, who invited them on. They drew closer to Cajamarca, passing through narrow, steep passages and struggling for breath as the altitude increased. They found a number of unguarded fortresses – Atahualpa made no move to stop them and seemed unconcerned by their approach. He was surrounded by his army and had just won the civil war – perhaps he felt that he had nothing to fear from such a small band of men. He was wrong.

Eventually they reached Cajamarca, a moderate-sized town of stone buildings with a triangular plaza at its centre. The conquistadors were informed that Atahualpa was outside the town. Hernando Pizarro, one of Francisco's four brothers, as well as a soldier named Hernando de Soto, were sent to speak to him.

Knowing the shock effect their warhorses had, de Soto proceeded to show off his horsemanship, at one point riding straight at Atahualpa. The Sapa Inca, however, was unfazed: despite never having seen a horse before, "his eyes were cast on the

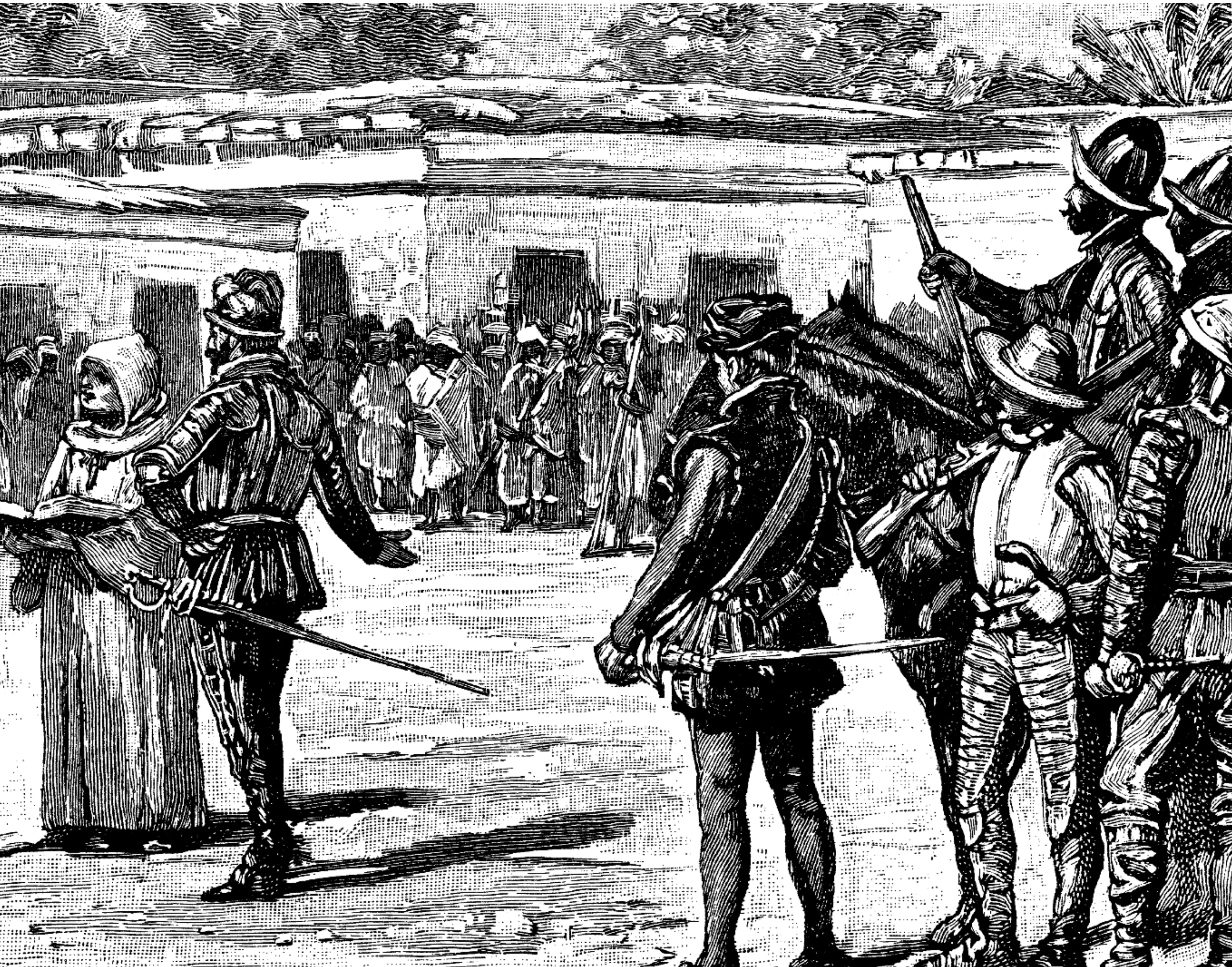


Atahualpa made a huge mistake when he met the Spanish without his full force

According to Xerez, "Atahualpa was a man of 30 years of age, good-looking, somewhat stout, with a fine face, handsome and fierce"

Sacsayhuamán's walls still stand - a testament to the imposing fortress

Machu Picchu was likely among Manco Inca's hiding places as he fled over the Andes



ground, without looking in any other direction," according to Xerez.

Atahualpa then challenged the Spaniards about their attacks on his people, but Hernando was characteristically bullish: "I answered that those people... were like women, and that one horse was enough for the whole of them."

Finally, Atahualpa agreed to meet Pizarro in the plaza of Cajamarca. He was surrounded by a sizable portion of his experienced, well-trained and devoted army, and yet Atahualpa elected to enter Cajamarca with only lightly armed men and unarmed retainers. His complacency would prove to be a serious mistake.

The Massacre of Cajamarca

Pizarro ordered his men to hide themselves in the plaza, while positioning his horsemen just outside, with his gunners nearby. The unsuspecting Atahualpa filed in with great pomp and ceremony. Xerez described the scene: "Next came three squadrons in different dresses, dancing and singing. Then came a number of men with armour, large metal plates, and crowns of gold and silver. Among them was [Atahualpa] in a litter lined with plumes of macaws' feathers, of many colours, and adorned with plates of gold and silver."

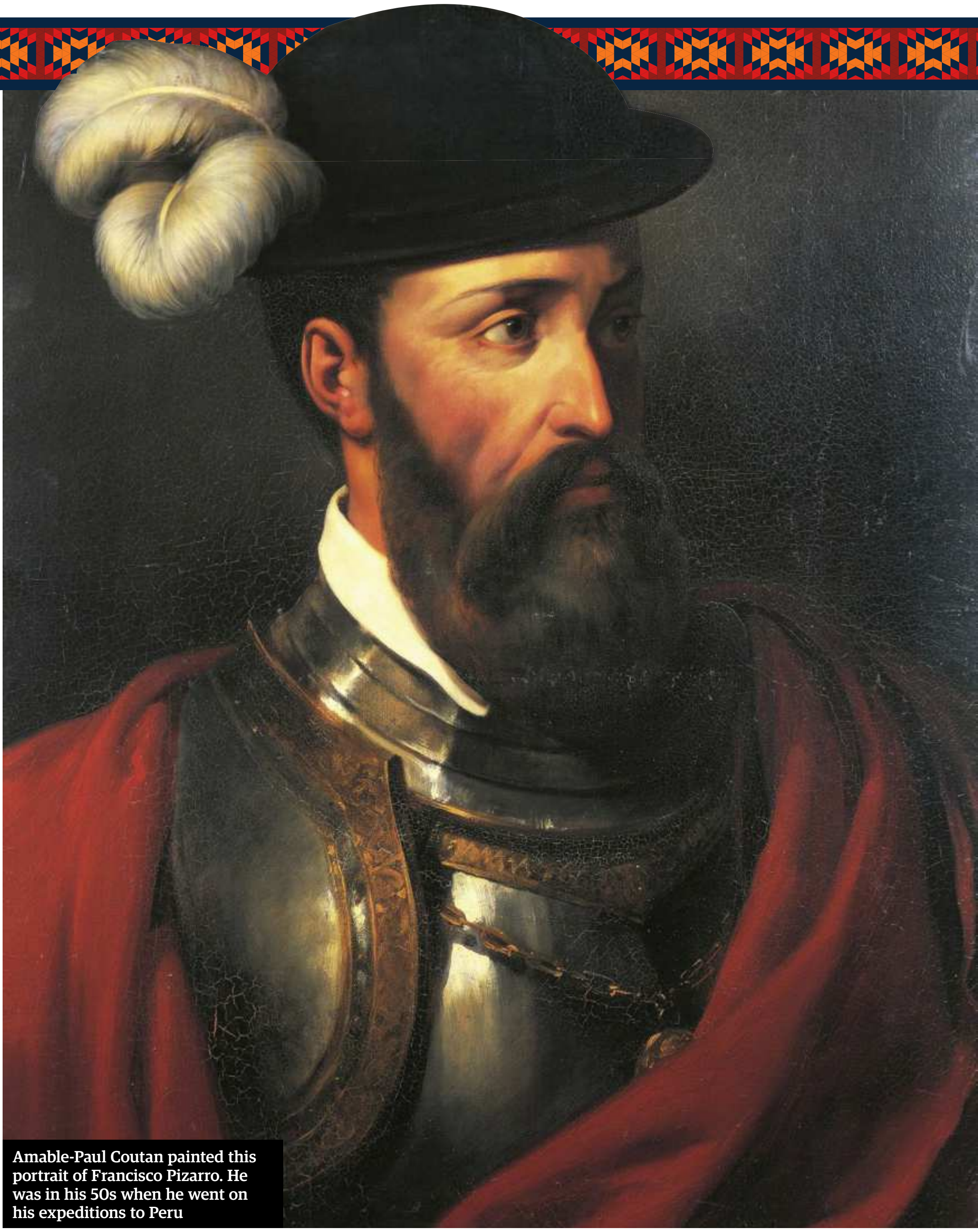
Atahualpa was met by a priest, Friar Vincente, who strode up to the Sapa Inca clutching a Bible. He told Atahualpa about Christianity: "I come to teach you. What I teach is that which God says to us in this Book," Xerez related. Atahualpa threw the book to the floor dismissively and again challenged the Spaniards about their aggression. The priest returned to Pizarro, beseeching him to attack.

Pizarro had his chance. He marched forward, seized Atahualpa by the arm and cried out "Santiago". The Spanish soldiers launched themselves at the unsuspecting Inca in the plaza, slaughtering them as they tried to escape. Guaman Poma, a Quechua nobleman, chronicled what happened next.

"They killed the Indians like ants. At the sound of the explosions and the jingle of bells on the horses' harness, the shock of arms and the whole amazing novelty of their attackers' appearance, the Indians were terror-stricken. The pressure of their numbers caused the walls to crumble and fall. Desperate to escape from being trampled under the hooves of the horses, in their headlong flight so many were trampled to death."

It's hard to know how many died in the massacre - hundreds, if not thousands. The Spanish now had under their control the most important man in South America.

"The Spanish soldiers launched themselves at the unsuspecting Inca in the plaza, slaughtering them"


Amable-Paul Coutan painted this portrait of Francisco Pizarro. He was in his 50s when he went on his expeditions to Peru

How had the small Spanish company succeeded in capturing Atahualpa? They used the element of surprise perfectly - not just in the start of the attack but by using their horses and guns to cause the greatest initial shock. But more than anything Atahualpa had badly miscalculated what the Spanish were capable of.

An Inca's ransom

Atahualpa was locked in a room. When Pizarro went to speak to him, he struck a deal: raising his hands as high as he could, Atahualpa promised to fill the room that high with gold and silver in exchange for his freedom (the room still exists, and is 12 by eight metres). Atahualpa sent out orders for his people to gather the gold and silver he'd promised. The Spanish were given licence to roam the lands and take any gold they found.

The ransom made every conquistador on the expedition rich beyond their wildest dreams. All the while Atahualpa was kept prisoner, although he was still able to send out orders. One of these was the execution of Huáscar, who was still imprisoned in Cusco. Atahualpa likely saw him as a major threat even in captivity.

Atahualpa had fulfilled his side of the agreement. Pizarro, however, would not permit the Inca ruler to leave. Instead he accused Atahualpa of treason and plotting against the Spanish and in a show trial found him guilty. He was to be burnt at the stake. Atahualpa pleaded to at least be killed another way, as burning was against his Inca beliefs, and he agreed to convert to Christianity in exchange for being garrotted instead.

In July 1533, at not much older than 30, Atahualpa, king of the Inca, was executed. It was a betrayal and injustice that shocked even the usually merciless Spanish invaders. Cieza de León declared it to be "the most despicable thing we Spanish ever did in the Indes", and Pedro Pizarro noted that, "I myself saw the general [Francisco Pizarro] weep."

With Atahualpa executed by the Spanish, and Huáscar executed by Atahualpa, the Spanish sought to place a new man on the throne. They settled on Manco Inca, another son of Huayna Cápac, to be their puppet. The Spanish headed to Cusco but were attacked repeatedly by Quizquiz. The Spanish eventually entered Cusco and Manco Inca swore to be a client of the king of Spain. He probably believed that they were allies, but he would soon come to realise that the Spanish saw his position very differently.

The Spanish ransacked everything, finding unimaginable wealth in the shrines, warehouses and gardens of the Andean city. Pizarro was not just here to loot and ransack though, and he established the city of Lima near the coast, as the sea was the base of Spanish power. The Spanish quickly took control, forbidding Manco Inca to leave Cusco. They freely looted and abused the people, raped women and murdered opponents. Tension was growing, which would soon boil over into all-out conflict.

The Inca fight back

In early 1535, following violent disagreement with Pizarro, Almagro headed out with a force of Spanish and Native American soldiers to explore and conquer Chile, with financial backing from his old partner. With Almagro out of the way, the Pizarro brothers controlled Cusco. But Manco Inca had other ideas. For months he'd been planning his next move, ordering extra crops grown and supplies gathered to feed a large force, and men from across the country began to gather.

In 1536 Manco Inca was finally able to escape, telling Hernando Pizarro that he was leaving to retrieve a solid gold statue for him. Ever-blinded by greed, Hernando let him go. Manco went straight to his generals to finalise their plan of attack.

There are several reports that detail what Manco said at the meeting. Cieza de León, who spoke to eyewitnesses, related how Manco listed the Spaniards' many crimes and their evil intentions: "Their goal is to see us so downtrodden and enslaved that all we will be fit for is to find them precious metals and give them our women and livestock."

Manco's plan was to await the arrival of his full force and then to simultaneously attack the Spanish forces in Cusco and Lima. Around May 1536, Manco launched his assault. With tens of thousands of soldiers, he attacked the Spanish garrison of around 170, plus their thousands of native allies. The Spanish could not hold the city and were penned into a compound around the central square. The Inca force burnt much of Cusco but was unable to dislodge the Spanish host. However, the Inca controlled the fortress of Sacsayhuamán, which controlled the battlefield.

Seeing its importance, Hernando Pizarro ordered his brothers Juan and Gonzalo to break through the Inca lines and attack the fortress from the rear. This they succeeded in doing, though Juan received a fatal wound, dying a day later. The Spanish stormed the fortress and took possession of its walls. An Inca commander, Titu Cusi Guallpa, fought wielding Spanish swords and put up a heroic defence. According to Pedro Pizarro, "the captain paced about like a lion, striding from one side of the tower to the other… he beat off any Spaniards who tried to get on top [of the tower]." However, the Spanish and their allies overwhelmed the defenders. The Inca counterattacked but were unable to wrest control of the fortress.

Buoyed by the success, Hernando ordered an assault on the Inca headquarters at Ollantaytambo, but the Inca used the high terrain and a diverted river stream to drive the Spanish back. Meanwhile, Francisco Pizarro was under threat in Lima. He sent five relief forces to Cusco: four were wiped out, while the fifth turned back, fearing the same fate. Quizu Yupanqui, the Inca general, moved forward to Lima and assaulted the city, but the power of the Spanish cavalry, backed up by native allies, shattered the Inca force.

The Siege of Cusco dragged on for ten months. Eventually, Inca supplies began to dwindle and morale started to drop. In 1537, Almagro and his force returned from Chile. They defeated the weary Inca outside the city walls and lifted the siege.

The Neo-Inca State

Demoralised and defeated, Manco Inca fled to different remote hideaways in the Andes, all the time pursued by the Spanish. He eventually escaped to the jungles around Vilcabamba. Gonzalo Pizarro continued to pursue him but failed to capture Manco Inca. In the remote jungles, Manco Inca established the Neo-Inca State, while the Spanish controlled everything else.

They continued to survive and follow their traditional way of life for decades. In 1544, Manco Inca was murdered by the same men who had killed Francisco Pizarro years earlier. Manco Inca's son, Sayri Túpac, became the ruler, but in 1558 he took up a Spanish offer of money, a home and servants in exchange for leaving Vilcabamba. Another of Manco Inca's sons, Titu Cusi, then became ruler and negotiated with the Spanish crown, campaigning for the Inca to be recognised as the rightful heirs to Peru. "The memory of men is weak and fragile," he said. "I am the legitimate son - that is, the firstborn and the son with the right of succession."

He died in 1571, to be succeeded by Túpac Amaru. His reign was to be a brief one. In 1572, a large Spanish force finally caught up with the Inca and ruthlessly destroyed their final stronghold. Their assault spelled the end for the Inca civilisation that had once stretched for thousands of kilometres across South America, the continent's dominant superpower brought to its knees by a mixture of disease, treachery and Spanish avarice.

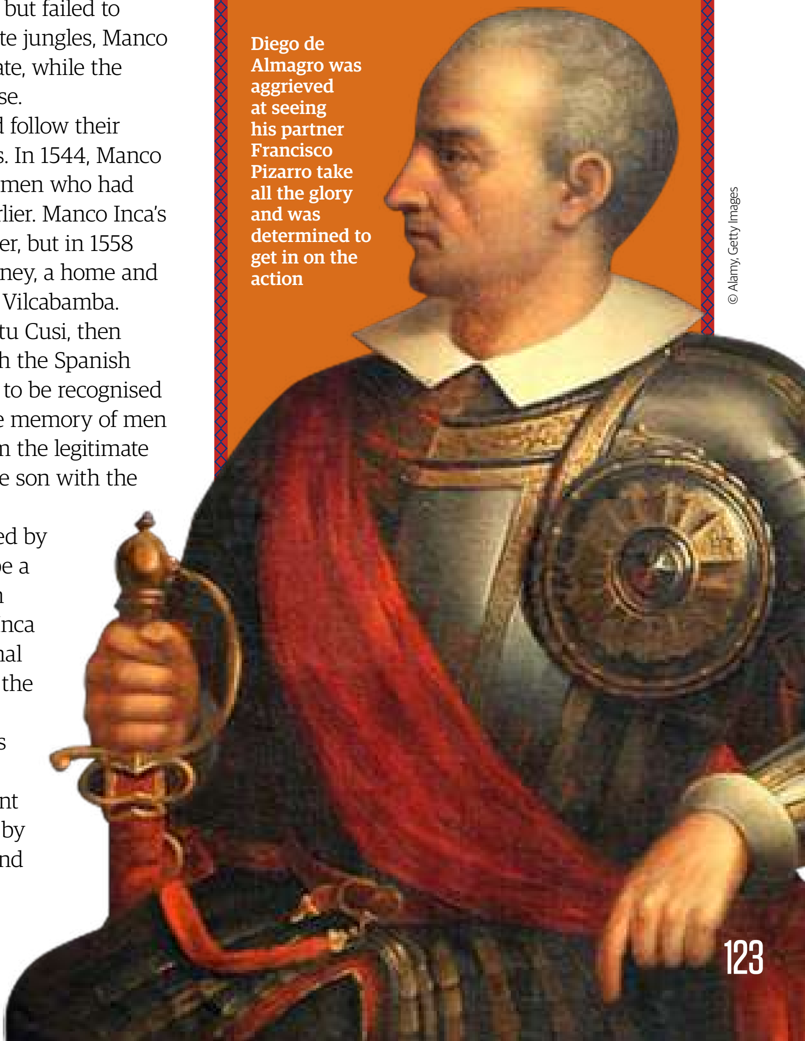
Family feuds

The Pizarros and Almagros were locked in conflict for generations

The partnership between Almagro and Francisco Pizarro soon turned bitter following Pizarro's journey to Spain. It sparked a disagreement that cost both men their lives and continued for generations. Following the Massacre of Cajamarca, Almagro was granted the lands to the south of the Inca Empire and beyond by the government in Spain, which Almagro interpreted as including Cusco. However, the Pizarro brothers had already established themselves there and were not prepared to relinquish it. Hernando in particular thought very little of Almagro.

Almagro went to Chile, part-funded by Pizarro as a peace offering, but upon his return Almagro seized Cusco and arrested Hernando and Gonzalo. Francisco negotiated their release, but Hernando was out for revenge and gathered an army to confront his one-time jailer. The two forces clashed at the Battle of Las Salinas and Almagro was resoundingly defeated. Hernando then had Almagro tried and executed, an act that would land him in prison for 20 years in Spain.

Almagro's supporters did not give up the fight and rallied behind his son, and in 1541 they plotted to murder Francisco Pizarro in Lima. When the plot was revealed to Pizarro, the supporters stormed his house and stabbed him to death. Diego de Almagro II then tried to claim Peru but was defeated and executed himself in 1542. It was a violent end to a partnership and a sign that the conquistadors were just as quick to attack and betray each other for personal and familial gain as they were to attack the Inca.



Diego de Almagro was aggrieved at seeing his partner Francisco Pizarro take all the glory and was determined to get in on the action

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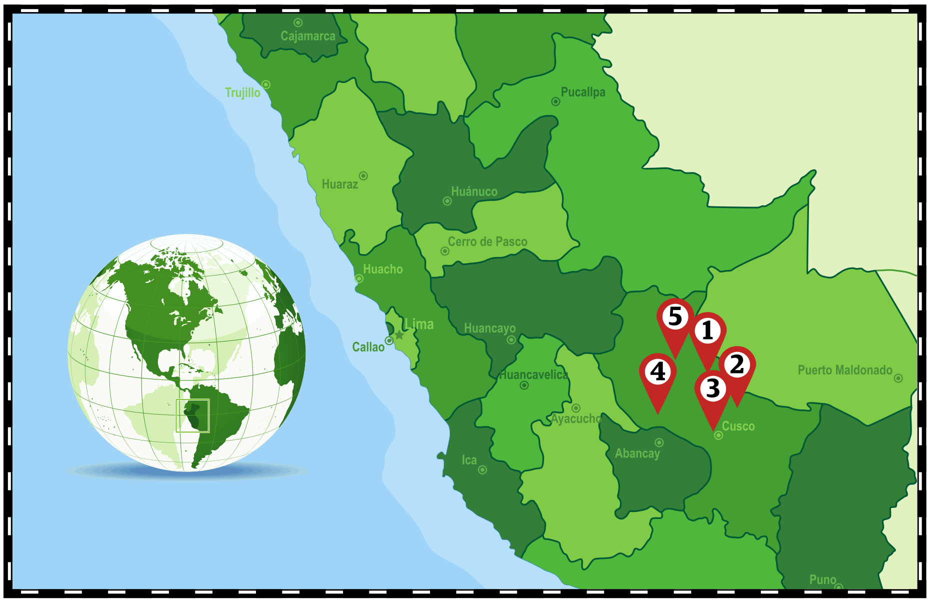
Places to Explore

Ancient Inca ruins

Five breathtaking Inca sites that aren’t Machu Picchu



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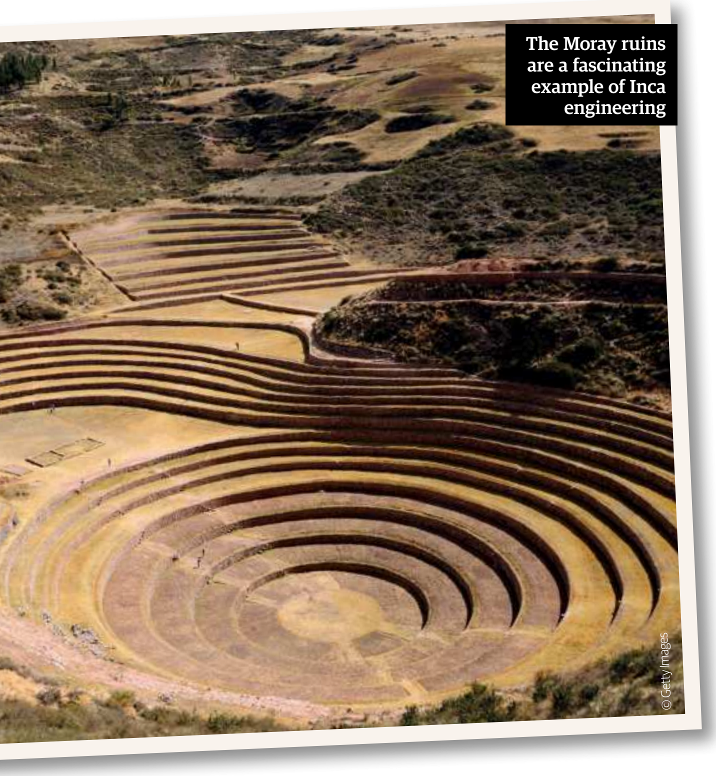
1 Moray

MARAS

One of the most fascinating Inca ruins, Moray is an archaeological site located in a remote area of the Sacred Valley. At first glance its concentric terraces are reminiscent of an ancient Roman amphitheatre, but sadly the purpose for this unique design remains unknown. However, the orientation of the ruins indicate that they were built for a specific reason, with the most likely suggestion being that they were used to experiment growing crops at different levels, with the temperature changing towards the top. Interestingly, the Moray ruins never flood, and this has suggested that there may be an irrigation system located underground. Visitors who wish to learn about the history of the Moray ruins will want to join a guided tour for more information, but remember to visit during the day, as there is no lighting in the evening. It is also worth noting that the Maras salt flats are located nearby if you have the time to make a quick visit.

Open seven days a week, 7am to 6pm. A Full Cusco Tourist Ticket for entry can be bought in Cusco, costing 130 soles, with concessions available.



The Moray ruins are a fascinating example of Inca engineering

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2 Inca Pisac

PISAC

Built on the top of a mountain that offers extraordinary views of the village of Pisac, the Inca Pisac ruins attract thousands of visitors every year. Found in the Sacred Valley of the Inca, it is believed that this archaeological site forms the shape of a bird, as the name ‘Pisac’ derives from the Quechua word ‘Pisaca’, which means ‘partridge’. The ruins are some of the most intact in Peru and are divided into four sections: Pisac, Inti Watana, Q’allaqasa and Kinchiraqay. The site was used by the Inca for religious, military and agricultural purposes, with a temple complex, ceremonial baths, a residential settlement, agricultural terraces and even the largest Inca cemetery among the sights available for visitors to explore. Situated just one hour away from Cusco, the Inca Pisac ruins are an ideal place to visit for a day out, particularly as Pisac itself offers a very popular market that is geared towards tourists.

The Inca Pisac ruins offer incredible mountain views

© Alamy

Open seven days a week, 6am to 5pm. A Full Cusco Tourist Ticket for entry can be bought in Cusco, costing 130 soles, with concessions available, or you can pay for entry at the site.

© Getty Images

Sacsayhuamán is the perfect place to visit if you enjoy hiking

3

Sacsayhuamán

CUSCO

This stunning Inca fortress, believed to have been built during the reign of Túpac Inca, is situated close to the city of Cusco and can be reached after a ten-minute drive or a 45-minute walk. Famous for its tightly constructed stone walls, with each piece of stone cut differently and joined together without the use of mortar, Sacsayhuamán stands as a testament to the clever engineering employed by the Inca. It took over 20,000 men to build this fortress, using stone from nearby quarries, but sadly only 40 per cent of the original site still remains. While Sacsayhuamán was used by the Inca for ceremonial purposes, it was famously used as a stronghold by the Spanish during a battle in 1536, with Sapa Inca Manco Inca Yupanqui successfully fending off an attack by the Spanish during his siege of Cusco. However, when the Spanish seized control over Cusco, they rebuilt it in their style using stones taken from Sacsayhuamán, leaving behind the heavy stones of the lower walls and towers. The remaining ruins serve as a reminder of one of the most important moments in Inca history and are a must-see for those who want to learn more about this remarkable civilisation. While at Sacsayhuamán, visitors should also take the time to visit the ruins of Tambomachay, Qenqo and Puca Pucara nearby.

◆

Open seven days a week, 7am to 5:30pm. Either a Full Cusco Tourist Ticket (130 soles) or Partial Cusco Tourist Ticket (70 soles) will allow entry.

4

Choquequirao Archaeological Park

CASERÍO MARAMPATA

Choquequirao offers a very challenging trek for explorers

© Getty Images

The Inca ruins at Choquequirao are some of the most remote in Peru, and they are frequently cited as the lesser-known twin of Machu Picchu thanks to the structural similarities between the two. Despite this, Choquequirao is far larger than Machu Picchu, and it is also situated on higher ground, with the site remaining well preserved due to the fact that it was never discovered by the Spanish. Surrounded by an ancient irrigation system and numerous examples of Inca stonework, Choquequirao was likely used by the Inca as an administrative checkpoint, as they had to travel through the area in order to reach the jungles of Vilcabamba. Among the structures that visitors will be able to see are temples, shrines, houses and baths, but it is strongly recommended that anyone wishing to visit research their trip to the ruins beforehand, because the remote trek takes around two days. While excavations at the site began around 40 years ago, roughly only 30 to 40 per cent of Choquequirao has been explored, and so there are still many mysteries waiting to be uncovered.

◆

Open all year round, it is best to visit Choquequirao during the dry season, from April to October.

Ollantaytambo has some of the best-preserved Inca ruins

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5

Ollantaytambo

OLLANTAYTAMBO

The town of Ollantaytambo was conquered and rebuilt by Pachacuti, who installed terraces for farming, an irrigation system and storehouses as part of the impressive Temple Hill, which is also known as the fortress. This site was famously the last stronghold and citadel for Manco Inca Yupanqui during his battle against the Spanish, with a military area located at the top offering a vantage point that allowed the Inca to see the arrival of enemy troops. However, Ollantaytambo was eventually captured by Francisco Pizarro and his men, forcing Manco Inca Yupanqui to retreat to the jungles of Vilcabamba where he founded the Neo-Inca State. Visitors will be able to see a number of the citadel's structures, including the storehouses and the Princess Baths - where ceremonial bathing took place - as well as the ones that were left incomplete, such as the Temple of the Sun, the Enclosure of the Ten Niches and the Wall of the Six Monoliths. It is said that the face that can be seen carved in the mountain is that of Viracocha, the Inca deity of creation, with the ruins offering some of the most spectacular walks and views in Peru. Ollantaytambo is also a common starting point for those who wish to take on the iconic Inca Trail, which is travelled by thousands of tourists every year.

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Open seven days a week, 7am to 6pm. Either a Full or Partial Ticket will allow entry.

Legacy of the Inca

Rituals of this mighty empire can still be experienced in modern Andean life

Written by Alice Barnes-Brown

The Sacred Valley, Peru, is the modern heart of Quechua culture

Cusco, one of South America's most energetic cities, is buzzing. High up in the Andes, tourists barter for woolly ponchos to take on their hikes while chefs sizzle up spicy stews and rich, potato-laden dishes. It's a thoroughly modern scene, but the legacy of the Inca is everywhere you look. As the capital of the Inca Empire, indigenous influences abound in Cusco's music, cuisine, language, art and architecture. And that's only at the start of the Inca Trail.

Around 90 kilometres away, beyond the busy plazas and food-filled streets of Cusco, stands Machu Picchu, the ruined mountaintop citadel with over 200 Inca structures to marvel at. Its dry stone walls, terraces and temples are one of South America's truly iconic treasures, featuring on postcards, in movies and in countless travel brochures. Hoards of people flock to see it - and therein lies a 21st-century problem.

Since its rediscovery in 1911, the site's custodians have fought a battle between growing tourist numbers and preserving its unique architecture. With more than 1.5 million visitors every year, Machu Picchu is Peru's most-visited attraction, and the revenue the Inca city generates is of crucial value to the country. But such high footfall causes structural and ecological damage to Machu Picchu, so in 2011, a limit on daily visitor numbers was introduced. Some say it's still not enough.

Those dedicated enough to trek to Machu Picchu on foot will have completed the iconic Inca Trail. The modern hiking route was built atop a section of the Qhapac Ñan, or 'Great Inca Road'. Believed to run from modern-day Colombia all the way to mountainous Mendoza, Argentina, many parts of the ancient road have survived and are still used as trails and highways.

That it survived not only the Spanish conquest but centuries of wear and tear shows the high level of care and skill with which the Qhapac Ñan was built. But, as with many remnants of the Inca Empire, modern governments in South America are working to protect the Qhapac Ñan from deterioration. Unlike Machu Picchu, tourists are actively encouraged to visit lesser-known sections of the Great Inca Road to raise money for its restoration. In 2014, UNESCO recognised the Qhapac Ñan as the planet's largest World Heritage Site, spanning six countries, 6,000 kilometres and 273 component sites.

Another UNESCO-recognised Inca treasure is the vibrant textile tradition they left behind. The alpaca wool and geometric patterns originating in South America are desired the world over,

Weaving was practised by the Inca and continues to be one of South America's tourist trades

Atmospheric pre-Columbian ruins are scattered all along the Qhapac Ñan

Tourists from all over the world come to complete the Inca Trail

“Those dedicated enough to trek to Machu Picchu on foot will have completed the iconic Inca Trail”

nowadays extracted from their culture and sold in high street shops. But even in their time, Inca fashions were renowned for their highly stylised animal motifs and excellent craftsmanship. The skill is kept alive by many Peruvians today, particularly in areas such as the Sacred Valley, where women run workshops that pass down the knowledge of the Inca to future generations and interested visitors.

As with many other pre-Columbian cultures, Inca food has been exported and adopted around the globe. The Inca cultivated over 200 varieties of potato, which has since become a staple crop. We have the Inca to thank for chilli, tomatoes, peanuts and quinoa. They're not just a taste sensation, either. Some of the ingredients we use today were prized by the Inca for their medicinal benefits. Quinine, used for its anti-malarial properties, comes from the Cinchona tree, which is native to Peru.

The Spanish may have attempted to stifle Inca culture, but parts of it survive among the millions of Quechua peoples of Peru, Bolivia and beyond. The indigenous people of South America continue to practise traditional religious rites, blended seamlessly with the Catholicism imported by the Spanish. Pay a visit to Cusco on 24 June and you'll be revelling in the Inti Raymi celebrations. Here, 750 Quechua actors portray ancestral Inca as a homage to the Sun god.

Quechua, the language of the Inca, has made a huge mark on the region. Many of Peru's places and common names have Quechua roots. It was recognised as a national language by the Peruvian and Bolivian governments in 1975. However, where Quechua culture flourishes, so too does repression and colonialism – indigenous groups have regularly been subjected to brutal violence, political exclusion and even forced sterilisation by their own national governments.

The fact the Inca left no written history (and that other forms of evidence were systematically destroyed by colonisers) means that much of our knowledge about the Inca is incomplete. But even that inconvenient truth adds to the wonder of this ancient Andean empire. The enduring mystery of their society has allowed modern imaginations to run wild. Eerie ruined Inca cities exist in books, on cinema screens and even in computer games. In the real world, abandoned Inca temples and towns pull in visitors hoping to uncover their own piece of the puzzle. We might never know the whole truth about the Inca – and that is the secret to their success.

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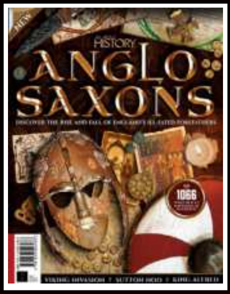
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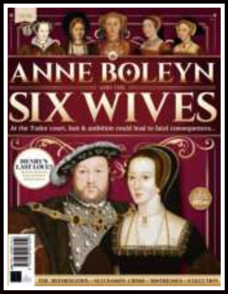
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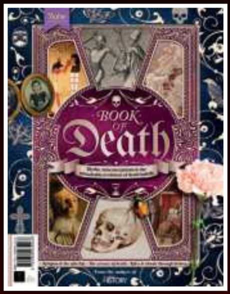
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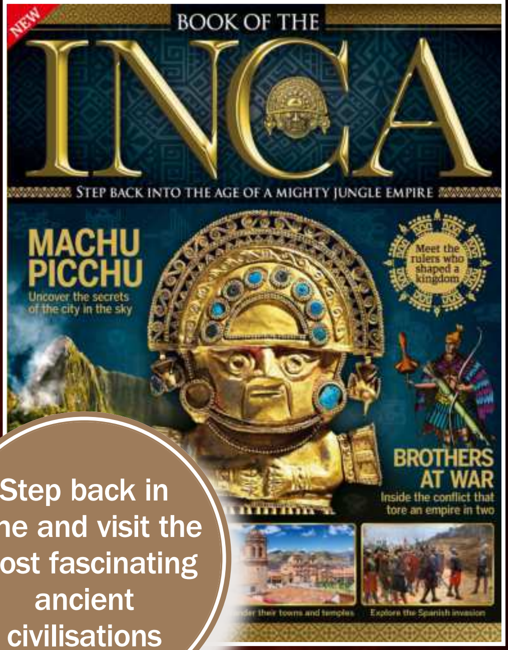
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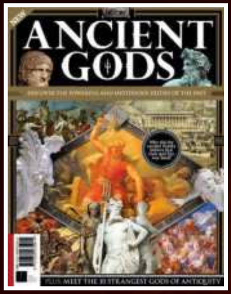
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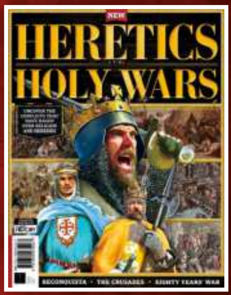
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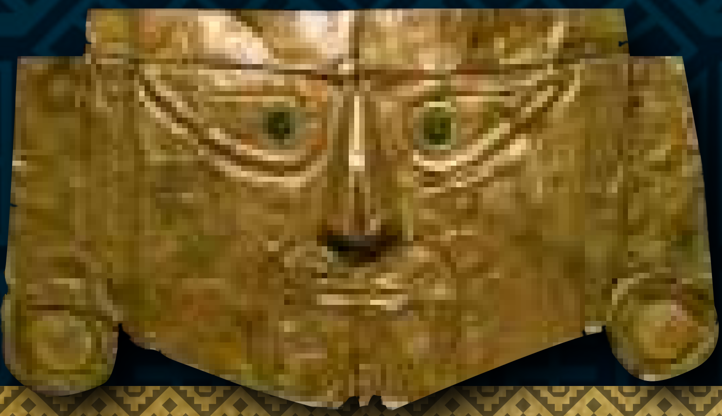

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